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ABSTRACT

This report, authorized by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, contains information on the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children (SMI), a reform of school-meals programs aimed at upgrading the nutritional content of school meals. The purpose of the study was to describe and evaluate: (1) overall implementation of the SMI; (2) key operational characteristics of school-meals programs at both the school district and state agency level; and (3) training and technical assistance associated with school-meals programs. Findings are based on data collected from self-administered mail surveys, supplemented by telephone interviews, from a nationally representative sample of school food directors in 2,038 school districts and from 50 state child nutrition agencies responsible for administrating school-meals programs. This second of three reports covers the 1998-99 school year. Key findings are summarized under the following broad topics: overall status of SMI implementation; procedures followed in implementing the SMI; impact of the SMI; selected operational issues; and state child nutrition agency operations. The report contains numerous tables and the survey instruments used for the data collection. (WFA)

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Special Nutrition Programs
Report No. CN-01-SMI2

The School Meals Initiative Implementation Study

Second Year Report

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The School Meals Initiative Implementation Study Second Year Report

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SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY: SECOND YEAR REPORT

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Members of the Food and Nutrition Subcommittee of the Education Information Advisory Committee (EIAC) of the Council of Chief State School Officers have again reviewed drafts of the survey instruments and have again made several helpful suggestions.

The Office of Analysis and Evaluation of the Food and Nutrition Service of the US Department of Agriculture was responsible for oversight of the study. John Endahl, followed by Patricia McKinney, served as Contracting Office's Representatives. In this capacity, both have provided sound and thoughtful direction to the study.

The study was directed by Sameer Abraham of The Gallup Organization with the assistance of Lynn Daft of PROMAR *International*. In addition to the overall supervision of the study, The Gallup Organization was chiefly responsible for sample design and selection and data collection. PROMAR *International*'s principal responsibilities were data analysis and preparation of the final report. Both organizations participated in development of the research plan and instrument development.

Several staff members of these organizations played important roles in the conduct of this study. They include Manas Chattopadyay, Margrethe Montgomery, Bob Montgomery, and Darby Miller Steiger of The Gallup Organization and Brooke Wilbraham and Debra White of PROMAR *International*.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) are central parts of a national policy designed to safeguard and promote the nutritional well-being of the Nation's children. The programs are administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), operating through State agencies (SAs) that have agreements with the local school systems in their States.

Despite the progress that has been achieved over the years in enhancing the quality of school meals, results of research conducted in the early 1990s indicated that school meals, on balance, were failing to meet certain key nutritional goals. In late 1993, the USDA launched a far-reaching reform of the school meals programs, a reform aimed at upgrading the nutritional content of school meals. The several elements of this reform are collectively referred to as the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children (SMI). The status of this initiative, together with selected operational issues of these programs, are the principal subjects of this report.

Purpose of the Study

In September 1996, FNS contracted with The Gallup Organization, with the support of PROMAR *International*, to conduct a national study of USDA's school-based child nutrition programs. This is the second in a series of three reports. The first report, *The School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, was published in October 2000. This report builds on the findings of the first year report while examining several new topics as well.

Methodology

The findings in this report are based on data collected from a nationally representative sample of school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the NSLP and from the 50 State child nutrition agencies responsible for administration of the program. Data were collected during School Year (SY) 1998/99 through use of self-administered mail surveys, supplemented by telephone interviews where necessary.

The database of public school districts maintained by Quality Education Data (QED) was used in drawing the sample. Two types of school districts represented in the QED database were found to be appropriate for inclusion in the study: (1) regular public school districts and (2) school districts administered by supervisory unions. While regular school districts are coterminous with SFAs, in the case of supervisory unions it was found that more than one district was served by an individual SFA. Given this difference, regular school districts and school districts in supervisory unions were sampled separately. A sample of 2,325 districts (2,225 regular school districts and 100 supervisory union districts) was drawn.

The sample frame for the regular school districts was stratified by two levels of poverty and by the seven FNS administrative regions. The sample of 2,225 regular school districts was allocated to the 14 strata in proportion to the number of school districts in each stratum. The frame for school districts in supervisory unions was stratified by poverty level only; the sample of 100 districts was allocated disproportionately to ensure sufficient representation of high poverty districts. Within each stratum, the sample was drawn with probability proportional to size (PPS), where size was defined as the square root of the number of students enrolled in a district.

Of the 2,325 districts in the overall sample, 2,251 (97%) qualified for inclusion in the study by their participation in the NSLP. During the first year of the study, completed surveys were collected from 2,038 respondents, a response rate of 91%. During the second year, which is the basis of this report, completed surveys were collected from 1,998 respondents, a response rate of 89%. Completed surveys were collected from all 50 State child nutrition agencies (SAs) in both years.

Findings

Key findings of the study are summarized here by the following topics, which correspond to chapters in the report:

- overall status of SMI implementation
- procedures followed in implementing SMI
- impact of the SMI
- selected operational issues
- State child nutrition agency operations

Overall Status of SMI Implementation

The SMI identifies four menu planning options, as well as a fifth option for "any reasonable approach," that schools can use to meet the nutritional standards established by the USDA and the US Department of Health and Human Services in their *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The four menu planning options are Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP), Assisted

Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (ANSMP), Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning, and Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning. The purpose of this section is to determine how many school districts are using each of the menu planning systems, how far along they are in putting these systems in place, and their plans for completing the task. Although the SMI began in School Year 1996/97, States were allowed to grant two-year waivers, so the SMI was not fully operational until School year 1998/99, the year of this survey.

Use of menu planning systems

Survey findings for SY 1998/99 indicate that a large majority of both school districts (80.1%) and schools (71.1%) were using one of the two food-based systems. Most of the remaining districts and schools were using NSMP, 20.3% and 25.2%, respectively. ANSMP was being used in only 3.4% of all districts and 1.9% of all schools, the same share as the year before.

The distribution of districts among the menu planning systems changed comparatively little between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99. There was a slight shift away from traditional food-based and toward enhanced food-based.

Nutrient-based use for both meals

Of the school districts using one of the two nutrient-based menu planning systems (NSMP and ANSMP) in SY 1998/99, 92.3% were using them in their lunch programs and 70.3% in their breakfast programs. Slightly less than one-third (31.8%) of those districts using these systems for both meals were conducting a combined lunch/breakfast nutrient analysis.

Implementation status

School food directors report significant progress in the implementation of their chosen menu planning system. The share reporting that their chosen method was "fully implemented" rose from 34.8% in SY 1997/98 to 55.4% in SY 1998/99. Furthermore, the findings indicate that most districts are making substantial and rapid progress in moving toward full implementation. More than half of those districts reporting full implementation in SY 1998/99 had reported that they were no more than three-quarters implemented the year before.

Future intentions of food-based systems

Of those school districts using one of the food-based planning systems, 39.1% indicated that they were either working toward implementation of a nutrient-based system (22.3%) or planning to (16.8%). This is down from the 51.3% that had said in SY 1997/98 that they were either moving in this direction or planned to do so.

Operational Procedures

Use of menu cycles and weighting

Despite the many advantages of using menu cycles to standardize the process, results of the first year survey indicated that only about 40% of all districts were using them. Findings from the second year reveal solid growth in the number of districts using menu cycles with over half of all districts (50.1%) reporting their use in SY 1998/99. The increased use of menu cycles was particularly evident among districts using NSMP, ANSMP, and traditional food-based menu planning systems and among districts of medium size and poverty levels.

Of those districts using a nutrient-based menu planning system in SY 1998/99, 81.2% assigned weights in conducting nutritional analysis, about the same as the year before. However, the share of districts that exclude a la carte sales (67.6%) was down from the year before, particularly among the smaller school districts (less than 5,000 enrollment). Although the SMI had initially required the use of weights in nutritional analysis for NSMP and ANSMP systems, the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998 made these actions discretionary through SY 2002/03. However, the exclusion of a la carte food sales from the analysis is still required.

Actions of Food-based Districts not Conducting Nutrient Analysis

A significant share (36.9%) of all districts using food-based systems are conducting nutritional analysis, though they are not required to do so. This share is up from 33.1% in SY 1997/98. A large majority (94%) of all food-based systems reported having made changes in the composition of the foods they serve or in how foods are prepared.

Status of ANSMP School Districts

Comparatively few school districts (3.4%) were using ANSMP in SY 1998/99, the same share as the year before while the number of State agencies reporting that they are providing support dropped from 15 to 12. For those districts using ANSMP, State agencies are the principal source of analytic support, providing analysis to 46.4% of the total number.

Publicizing the nutrient content of menus

As was revealed in the first year findings, most districts (78.6%) do not publicize the nutrient content of their menus. Those districts using nutrient-based menu planning systems are almost twice as likely to publicize the nutrient content as are those districts using food-based systems, though the gap separating them narrowed between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99.

Impact of the School Meals Initiative

Impact of Nutrient-Based Menu Planning Systems

Ease of Implementation

For most of the key tasks associated with implementation of the nutrient-based menu planning systems, a majority or near-majority of the districts view them as a "minor burden." However, some tasks associated with entering and analyzing recipes and menus and obtaining nutrient information and information for weighted analysis continue to be seen as a "major burden" by most school food directors. This is significant since these tasks are critical to the operation of the nutrient-based menu planning systems. Taken as a whole, findings from the second year survey indicate that directors viewed the overall array of tasks as slightly less burdensome in SY 1998/99 than they had the year before, though not consistently so across all tasks.

Other Impacts

Findings for SY 1998/99 show that the demands on staff time for planning menus are substantially lower, as more nutrient-based systems become fully operational. It is too early to assess the impact on staff time relative to the requirements pre-SMI. A majority of these districts continue to report that their menus are "somewhat different" than the year before, though an increasing share (around 35%) report "no difference," suggesting that the pace of adjustment is beginning to slow.

A substantial share of all school districts using nutrient-based systems offered a la carte food sales - - 59.8% of elementary schools and 83.7% of middle/secondary schools. While the share of districts of less then 1,000 offering a la carte declined somewhat in SY 1998/99, among the largest districts, those of 25,000 or more, there was an increase for elementary schools. In addition, among those schools offering a la carte sales, the predominant trend appears to be one of increased sales. The highest percent of school districts reporting increased sales of a la carte are those in the more affluent districts.

Overall Impact of SMI on All School Districts

Menu related features

Changes in menu related features continued to move in a constructive direction in SY 1998/99. The share of all districts reporting an increase in the use of menu cycles continued to be about 20%.

Food Procurement and preparation

Results from the second year survey indicate that school districts continue to make numerous changes in their food procurement practices following implementation of the SMI. This includes increased purchases of fresh fruit and vegetables (68.8%) and low-fat and/or reduced-fat foods (69.4%), greater attention to requiring nutrition information from vendors (71.2%), and increased use of product specifications (48.8%).

Number of food choices

While most districts report "no change" in the number of food choices offered in reimbursable meals, significant shares (ranging from 16.1% to 48.7%) report increased choices. Increased choices were most prevalent among fruit, grain/bread, and vegetables. In comparison with responses for SY 1997/98, responses for the most recent year indicate that the pace of change is slowing and that an increasing share of districts are reaching a new equilibrium in terms of the number of food choices they are offering their students.

Portion sizes

Changes in portion size are one means that school food directors can adapt their menus to the nutritional objectives of the SMI. Findings from the second year survey indicate that districts continue to make changes consistent with healthier diets, though the pace of change has slowed. This is presumably a result of more districts achieving their desired portion sizes.

Number of a la carte items offered

The share of all districts not providing a la carte offerings of individual food categories (e.g. entrees, side dishes, desserts, etc.) generally increased slightly between SY 1997/98 and SY 1998/99. However, among those districts offering these foods a la carte, the share reporting an increased number of items rose sharply. The increase was most pronounced for snack and beverage items.

Plate waste

The predominant view of school food directors is that there has been no change in plate waste since the adoption of the SMI. Of those directors who perceive a change in the amount wasted, roughly twice as many feel that there is less waste now as feel there is more waste.

Difficulty in performing tasks

Survey respondents were asked if they experienced difficulty performing any of ten specified tasks associated with implementation of the SMI. From the standpoint of difficulty, the responses indicate that the tasks fall into two groups. For 6 of the 10 tasks, 70% or more of all respondents reported "no difficulty" in performing them. The tasks that were perceived to be a greater challenge were: documenting last-minute substitutions, substituting nutritionally comparable foods, adhering to standardized recipes, and maintaining food production records.

Program acceptance

The attitude of the principal stakeholders in the school food program toward the SMI offers a useful barometer of the initiative's success, having been in operation for two to three years. In three-quarters or more of the districts, all seven stakeholders (administrative staff, financial staff, kitchen managers, cooks, cashiers, students, and parents) are judged by the school food directors to be neutral-to-positive in their attitude toward the SMI and what it is all about. To the extent there has been an observable change between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99, it suggests a more neutral attitude on the part of some stakeholders.

School food directors remain highly supportive of the SMI. Of their total number, 67.7% say that they are "very positive" or "somewhat positive" and the share in the largest school districts (25,000 or more) and in high poverty districts is even higher.

Selected Operational Issues

Use of Food Service Management Companies

The share of all districts contracting with FSMCs continues to grow, increasing from 11.8% in SY 1997/98 to 13.8% in SY 1998/99. Of the school food directors working in these districts, 75.5% reported that they were employed by the FSMC. Most districts that contract with FSMCs (75% to 85%) look to the FSMCs to plan and prepare menus and to select and buy food. Responsibility for administrative and support tasks, like preparing reimbursement claims or selling lunch tickets is divided among the districts (one-third), the FSMCs (one-third) and a combination of district and FSMC (one-third). Nearly half (49.1%) of all districts under contract to FSMCs determine the amount of their fee on a per-meal basis. Another 29.3% pay a flat administrative fee while the remaining 18.4% use a combination of the two payment systems.

Of the approximately 1,800 school districts that contracted with FSMCs in SY 1998/99, nearly half (48.5%) converted a la carte and snack food sales to a meal equivalent basis in determining the FSMC fee. FSMC performance is most frequently monitored by district business managers (70.5%) and district superintendents (56.6%). Although required by regulation to do so, only 72.4% of districts managed by FSMCs said that they performed an independent check of meal counts.

Internet Access

About two-thirds (67%) of all school food directors have access to the Internet from some location. Most frequently this access is at the office (82.7%), followed by home (44.8%), and the library (25.7%). The majority of those who use the Internet reported using it 1-2 times per week, on average. Overall, fewer than half of those directors with access to the Internet had ever visited any of the major child nutrition web sites maintained or supported by the USDA. Use of the Internet was found to be substantially higher among the larger school districts.

Direct Certification

Nationwide, an estimated 70.8% of all districts use direct certification in establishing student eligibility for free meals with 34.5% of all approved students certified directly. Most of these districts (around 90%) use a State-operated system for this purpose. Of those districts with access to State-operated systems, 50.2% indicate that the State notifies the qualifying households directly.

Provision 1, 2, and 3 Schools

In SY 1998/99, an estimated 4,400 schools (5.5%) in 810 public NSLP school districts (6.2%) operated under the Provision 1, 2, or 3 alternatives for determining student eligibility for free meals. These alternatives are used with much greater frequency in the largest districts and in high poverty districts.

Afterschool Care Programs

Nearly one-third (31.8%) of all public NSLP school districts report that afterschool care programs are held in some of their schools. The incidence of these programs is closely associated with district size. While 15.2% of districts of less than 1,000 held afterschool programs in SY 1998/99, 84.9% of districts of 25,000 or more held them. The vast majority of these programs (92%) are held in elementary schools. Most frequently, the programs are sponsored by the school district. It should be noted that, in SY 1998/99, child participation in afterschool care programs was low. Within the districts that host these programs, participants represented only 1.8% of total enrollment.

Survey results indicate that at least 60% of the programs served some food, mostly in the form of snacks. To the extent food was served and respondents knew who was responsible for its preparation, 50.4% responded that it was program sponsors and 44.7% school food service employees.

Charter Schools

Across all public NSLP school districts, 6.3% reported having charter schools within their districts. The incidence was found to vary from 2.5% among districts of less than 1,000 to 42.2% among districts of 25,000 or more. About half (46.8%) of all school districts with charter schools are responsible for food service to these schools. Just over one-quarter (26.5%) report that no food service is provided in their charter schools. Over half (53.9%) of districts with less than 1,000 offer no food service to the students in their charter schools.

Meal Counting Systems

Of the several different meal counting systems that are in use (with many districts using more than one system), those in most frequent use are cashier's list (55.9%), coded tickets or tokens (47.0%), and bar codes/magnetic strips (33.5%). Essentially all districts (98.8%) report that someone at the point of service checks each meal to determine that it qualifies as a reimbursable meal. When a child comes to the point of service with food items that do not qualify as a reimbursable meal, 88.6% indicated that their cashiers instruct the child to return and pick up the missing item. The majority of all districts (93.6%) conduct periodic reviews of their meal counts to help ensure their accuracy.

Views of the State Directors of Child Nutrition Programs

SFA Use of Alternative Menu Planning Systems

State Directors reported very little change in the number of SFAs using the alternative menu planning systems between SY 1997/98 and SY 1998/99. Over 4 out of 5 SFAs continue to use one of the two food-based systems with slightly more using the enhanced system (45%) compared to the traditional system (38%). To the extent that any change occurred between these years, there was a slight shift away from both the ANSMP and the enhanced food-based approach and toward traditional food-based menu planning. A decline in the number of State agencies (SAs) providing direct ANSMP support from 15 to 12 was also reported.

Training and Technical Assistance

As the SMI was in its third year of operation at the time of this survey, the levels of training activity were substantially lower than reported in the *First Year Report*. For example, the median number of training sessions held per SA was 9 in SY 1997/98 compared to 30 during SYs 1995/97. Still, most SAs continue to provide training and technical assistance in support of the SMI with the number of SAs ranging from 40 to 47, depending on the form of support provided.

Compliance Reviews

State agencies are required to conduct periodic evaluations of SFA compliance with the nutrition requirements of SMI. If the evaluation reveals that the nutritional standards are not being met, the SA helps the SFA develop an improvement plan to remedy the deficiency. Survey results indicate that the pace at which SAs are conducting these reviews is highly variable. While 9 States reported that they had not conducted any reviews in SY 1997/98, 17 States reported that they had conducted reviews for 20% or more of all their SFAs. The total number of school sites reviewed for SMI compliance in SY 1997/98 was 2,201, compared to 2,356 the year before. Of the SFAs reviewed in SY 1997/98, over half (56%) required improvement plans, down from 68% in SY 1996/97.

Direct Certification

To lessen the administrative burden of establishing a child's eligibility for free meals, SFAs or their State agency can directly certify those children in households eligible to receive assistance through certain means-tested programs. This method is called "direct certification." Of the 50 SAs, 45 reported that they were using direct certification to identify and qualify eligible students for free meals. In most of these States (40 of 45), a State agency other than the Child Nutrition Agency participated in developing and forward information to the SFAs. In 17 of the 40 States, this other agency assumed full responsibility for developing the information. The lists of eligible children are generally developed annually (38 of the 45 States), though a few prepare them more frequently.

Food Service Management Companies

Of the 48 States that permitted Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs) to contract with SFAs in their States, 41 reported that FSMCs had contracts with 1,675 school districts (12% of all public NSLP districts) in their States in SY 1998/99. About two-thirds of all SAs reported providing their SFAs with some form of technical assistance relating to FSMCs, most frequently in the form of prototype specifications and contract provisions.

Charter Schools

State agencies reported that 521 charter schools were participating in the NSLP in 19 States in SY 1998/99. Most SAs that maintain separate records for charter schools said that it was their policy to grant charter schools within their States separate SFA status. At the time of the survey, 66% of all charter schools taking part in the NSLP had been granted separate SFA status.

State Agency Support for SFA Procurement

Nearly all SAs (46 of 50) were found to be providing SFAs with some form of procurement assistance. This included: technical assistance on request (82%), conducting periodic oversight of SFA procurement (78%), providing procurement materials describing best procurement practices (74%), and conducting formal training programs (60%). In providing procurement support to SFAs, the topics most frequently addressed included those relating to Federal and State regulations, labeling and product specifications, and the organization and operation of purchasing cooperatives.

State Agency Supervision of SFA Financial Management

Most State agencies report that they were providing their SFAs with financial management assistance in some form in SY 1998/99. Most frequently, this was in the form of guidance on how to price school meals or guidance on establishing and monitoring the performance of financial management systems. In SY 1998/99, SAs conducted organization-wide financial compliance audits of nearly 11,300 SFAs (80% of all SFAs). A relatively small share of these audits required follow-up attention (less than 1% in 17 States and no more than 10% in another 18 States). Most of the problems requiring follow-up attention are reportedly corrected within 3 months.

State Agency Contracting

Of the 50 SAs, 22 reported having contract employees on their staffs at the time of the survey in SY 1998/99. Most of these contracts are with individuals though some are arranged through employment agencies or other State agencies. Many SAs (39 of 50) contract for a wide variety of services from other organizations. The most frequented contracted services, by far, were computer programming (22 SAs) and nutritional analysis (17 SAs).

CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

In late 1993, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) began a major reform of the school meals programs known as the "School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children" (SMI). The central purpose of this reform is to upgrade the nutritional content of school lunches and school breakfasts. This report is the second in a series of three that assess the status of SMI implementation and other operational features of the school meals programs.

This chapter offers a brief introduction to the school meals programs and to the SMI. Following this introduction, it describes the purpose of the study and the objectives of the report. It concludes with an outline of the contents of this report.

School Meals Programs

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) are key instruments of a national policy designed to safeguard the nutritional well-being of the Nation's children. They are administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the USDA, operating through State agencies (SAs) that have agreements with the local school systems in their States. The NSLP was authorized in 1946 followed by the SBP in 1975. In Fiscal Year 1999, over 4.5 billion lunches were served to nearly 27 million kids in over 96,000 schools and institutions and nearly 1.3 billion breakfasts are served to some 7.4 million kids in more than 71,000 schools and institutions.

To achieve the health and dietary aims of these programs, participating schools are required to serve meals that meet prescribed nutritional standards. Until recently, USDA achieved this exclusively by identifying minimum amounts of food types (meat/meat alternative, bread/grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk) that were to be incorporated in meals that were nutritionally balanced and provided approximately one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) developed by the National Science Foundation.

To help all Americans make better dietary choices, the USDA and the US Department of Health and Human Services jointly developed the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The Dietary Guidelines were first issued in 1980 and have been updated every five years since. Among other recommendations, the Dietary Guidelines call for diets in which fat comprises no more than 30% of caloric intake and saturated fat accounts for less than 10% of total calories for individuals two years of age and older. While these Dietary Guidelines were developed for Americans of all ages, they offer a useful standard against which to measure the performance of the NSLP and SBP.

Despite increased attention to the Dietary Guidelines and the development and growth of programs like the NSLP and SBP, nutritional imbalances are increasingly commonplace in the American diet, indicating the need for changes in what we eat if we are to have healthful diets. An excessive intake of fat, saturated fat, and sodium and too little intake of foods containing complex carbohydrates and fiber have been shown by an accumulation of scientific evidence to have harmful health consequences.

Substantial progress has been achieved over the years in enhancing the quality of school meals. Nevertheless, results of USDA research conducted in the early 1990s indicated that school meals, on balance, were not meeting certain key elements of the Dietary Guidelines. School lunches were found to exceed the recommended levels of fat, saturated fat, and sodium by a substantial margin and fell short of the recommended level of carbohydrates.

The School Meals Initiative

The USDA developed the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children for the purpose of bringing schools meals in compliance with the Dietary Guidelines. The SMI has four major missions. They are:

1. *Meeting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.* Nutritional requirements that help make it possible for school meals to meet the Dietary Guidelines are the centerpiece of the SMI. Schools were to begin compliance with the Dietary Guidelines at the beginning of School Year 1996/97 unless granted a waiver to postpone implementation until no later than SY 1998/99. There are now five menu-planning options that schools can use to meet the new standards. The fifth approach which allows schools to develop their own menu planning system was added in May 2000. The options are:

    - Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP)
    - Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (ANSMP
    - Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning
    - Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning
    - Alternative Menu Planning

    NSMP and ANSMP are both accomplished through use of computer nutrient analysis. The principal distinction between the two is that NSMP is conducted by the school district or "school food authority" (SFA) while a second party, such as the State Child

Nutrition Agency or a consultant conducts the nutrient analysis for ANSMP. Both techniques represent a significant departure from the approach that was formerly used. The other two menu planning options – enhanced food-based and traditional food-based – continue to base menu planning on prescribed portion sizes and food components. The principal difference between the two food-based approaches is that the enhanced system calls for increased quantities of vegetables, fruits, breads, and grains. Despite their different approaches, all menu-planning systems are required to achieve the same result; that is to produce meals that meet the Dietary Guidelines.

2. *Providing nutrition education, training, and technical assistance.* Under the banner of Team Nutrition, the USDA provides an extensive array of nutrition education, training, and technical assistance support for State and local school food professionals. This includes training standards and materials, and the creation of public/private partnerships to promote healthy eating among school children.

3. *Making improvements in donated commodities.* With the guidance of its Commodities Improvement Council, the USDA has made a number of changes in its commodity distribution program. Collectively, these changes have further improved the nutritional profile of the commodities the USDA buys for donation to schools. More recently, the USDA has initiated "Food Distribution 2000," a major review of all aspects of the program that will result in additional reform.

4. *Streamlining program administration.* To free the time of school food personnel for the increased demands of the new menu planning systems, the Department has made changes designed to reduce the administrative burdens and paperwork requirements of the participating school districts. For example, the Department has extended the length of the coordinated review effort (CRE) cycle from 4 to 5 years. It also eliminated the requirement that school districts conduct daily checks of their meal counts if the district has an established record of accurate meal counts.

Purpose of the Report

This report is the second of three that will be issued as part of this study. The principal focus of the First Year Report was the SMI, its status, how it was being implemented, and its impact, as of School Year (SY) 1997/98.[1] That report marked the first collection of SMI information from a nationally representative sample of school districts since the initiative got underway in SY 1996/97. The only other source of detailed information relating to the SMI was from an evaluation of a USDA-sponsored demonstration of Nutrient Standard Menu Planning that had been conducted in 34 SFAs in SY 1994/95 through SY 1996/97.[2]

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[1] FNS, USDA, *SMI Implementation Study: First Year Report.* Prepared by the Gallup Organization and PROMAR *International*, October 2000.

The objectives of this Second Year Report are two-fold. They are as follows:

- *Implementation of the School Meals Initiative*. The primary objective of the report is to assess progress in the implementation of the SMI as of SY 1998/99, including comparisons with the previous school year. The impact of the SMI on a number of operational and performance measures is examined as well.
- *Special issues*. A secondary objective of the report is to examine several program issues of current interest to FNS. This includes the role of food service management companies in school feeding programs, use of the Internet by SFAs, the use of direct certification of eligibility for free and reduced price meals, the participation of SFAs in after-school care programs, and the use of alternative meal counting systems.

Outline of the Report

The report describes and interprets results of the second year surveys of a national sample of public SFAs participating in the NSLP and of the 50 State Child Nutrition Agencies. The data were collected during SY 1998/99. We begin with a brief description of study methodology, including study design, sample selection, and data collection procedures in Chapter II. This is followed in Chapter III by a description of some of the key characteristics of school districts participating in the school meals programs.

The following three chapters are devoted to the SMI, its current status and impact. In the first of these, Chapter IV, we provide an up-dated assessment of the schools' progress in implementing the alternative menu planning systems. In Chapter V, we review the experience of the SFAs in applying the operational procedures required under the SMI. This is followed in Chapter VI by an examination of the impact of SMI on a wide range of factors including staffing requirements, food procurement and preparation, and program acceptance. Throughout these chapters, comparisons are made between the status of the SMI in SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99.

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[2] FNS, USDA, *Evaluation of the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning Demonstration: Final Report*, Prepared by Abt Associates, August 1998.

Chapter VII is devoted to an examination of the several operational issues that are of topical interest to FNS. For each topic, the level and nature of SFA involvement is described. The final chapter, Chapter VIII, is based on information collected from the State Child Nutrition Agencies. Beyond reviewing the status of the SMI as viewed from the vantage point of the State, a range of operational topics are examined including State Agency involvement in SFA procurement, supervision of SFA financial management, and contracting for services.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This report is part of a three-year study of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's school-based child nutrition programs. The study is based on data collected from a nationally representative sample of school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and from the State agencies responsible for administration of the program. Data for the study were collected through use of self-administered mail surveys, supplemented by computer-assisted telephone interviews, where necessary. Two surveys – one for the SFAs and another for the State agencies – were administered in SY 1998/99.

Survey instruments for SY 1998/99 were developed in the spring of 1998. Both instruments were reviewed by the Education Information Advisory Committee (EIAC) of the Council of Chief State School Officers. The SFA survey used in SY 1997/98, which served as the model for this instrument, was pre-tested with six school districts from different parts of the nation and ranging in size from less than 5,000 enrollment to more than 120,000.

Design of the sample and its implementation are discussed in the following section. Once the sample was drawn, State CN Agencies were asked to confirm that the sampled SFAs within their respective States were participating in the NSLP and to provide names, addresses, and telephone numbers for each SFA. This information was collected in early 1998. For the second year surveys, pre-notification letters were mailed in February 1999 to SFAs in the sample, including those that failed to respond to the first year survey, followed by SFA and State survey mailings about one week later. For those SFAs that did not respond to the survey or to the follow-up prompts or that provided incomplete responses, telephone interviews were conducted, as required, during May-August 1999. Data collection for the year-two surveys was concluded in September 1999. As indicated in Table II-1, the SFA response rates (number of completed interviews divided by the eligible sample size) varied from 77% to 93%, with an overall response rate of 88%. For the State survey, the response rate was 100%.

Sample Design and Implementation

The universe for the State agencies for the year-one study consisted of the Directors of Child Nutrition Programs in all 50 States. Since a census was conducted of all 50 agencies, a sample was not required. The target population of SFAs was comprised of all public SFAs in the 50 States and the District of Columbia. In most instances, SFAs are coterminous with school districts; in a few instances they are not. The database of public school districts maintained by Quality Education Data (QED) of Denver, Colorado was determined to be the most complete and accurate frame readily available to the study.

Within this frame, it was determined that there were two types of school districts that were appropriate for inclusion in the study. One was what QED termed "regular public school districts." The other type consisted of fiscally independent districts that were administered by "supervisory unions." Of the 14,104 public school districts in the frame, 13,192 were regular districts and 912 were districts in supervisory unions. And while regular public school districts were identical to SFAs, it was determined through consultation with several State agencies that in some supervisory unions more than one district was served by an individual SFA. In effect, with the supervisory union districts it was not known which district belonged to which SFA and how many SFAs there were among these districts. Given this difference, regular school districts and school districts in supervisory unions were sampled separately. Assuming an eligibility rate of 95% and a response rate of 90%, it was determined that a sample of 2,325 districts – consisting of 2,225 regular school districts and 100 supervisory union districts – was required.

The frame for the regular school districts was first stratified into fourteen strata according to a cross-classification of poverty status and USDA regions. Two levels of poverty (high and low) and FNS's seven administrative regions were used. The Orshansky measure in the QED frame was used to define poverty levels. High poverty districts were defined as those districts where 30% or more of the enrolled students were from families with incomes below the poverty line. According to this definition, 32% of the districts were classified as high poverty, and 68% of the districts were classified as low poverty.

The sample of 2,225 regular school districts was allocated to the 14 strata in proportion to the number of school districts in each stratum. Therefore, the sampling fraction was about 2,225/13,192 = 16.87% in all strata. Table II-1 describes the sample allocation to each stratum. Within each stratum, the sample was drawn with probability proportional to size (PPS), where size was defined as the square root of the number of students enrolled in a district. By using the square root instead of the actual enrollment, the skewness in the size distribution was reduced so that a sufficient number of small districts could be included in the sample.

Since the QED database includes all school districts, including some that do not participate in the NSLP, it was necessary to ask the State agencies to review the list of sampled districts in each of their States to determine if any were ineligible for inclusion in the study. Of the 2,225 regular school districts, 67 districts (3%) were found to be ineligible. This share is consistent with the results of past studies.

Table II-1: Regular public school districts, 1998

Stratum	Poverty (high=1, low=2)	Region	Total population size	Total sample size	Sample size (Eligible)	Completed interviews	Response rates (%)
1	1	1	198	33	33	26	77
2	1	2	324	55	55	49	90
3	1	3	751	127	126	116	91
4	1	4	203	34	34	29	90
5	1	5	555	94	94	84	89
6	1	6	1,411	238	237	221	93
7	1	7	800	135	133	119	93
8	2	1	1,088	183	175	155	88
9	2	2	2,813	474	451	401	88
10	2	3	1,781	300	291	271	90
11	2	4	1,046	177	169	133	77
12	2	5	494	83	83	77	89
13	2	6	651	110	109	97	87
14	2	7	1,077	182	168	150	85
Total			13,192	2,225	2,158	1,928	88

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

The frame for school districts in supervisory unions was stratified by poverty level – high poverty and low poverty, using the same Orshansky cutoff. Thus, it contained 145 high poverty districts and 767 low poverty districts. The sample was allocated to the two strata disproportionately, with 32 to high poverty districts and 68 to low poverty, to ensure sufficient representation of high poverty districts. Within each stratum the sample was drawn based on a probability proportional to size sampling scheme, i.e. using the same procedure that was used for sampling the regular school districts. As noted above, more than one of these districts could be associated with the same SFA. There were instances where both high poverty districts and low poverty districts were being served by the same SFA. Table II-2 below provides the details of the sample of supervisory union districts.

Table II-2: Public school districts in supervisory unions, 1998

Stratum	Poverty	Total population size	Total sample size	Sample size (Eligible)	Completed interviews
1	High	145	32	30	24
2	Low	767	68	63	46
Total		912	100	93	70

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report,* 2001.

Data Analysis and Reporting

The sample data were weighted so that inferences could be drawn regarding the universe of all public school districts in the 50 States and the District of Columbia that participate in the NSLP. Weights were designed to adjust for differential probabilities of selection and non-response. Since those school districts that are in supervisory unions were selected into the sample through a sampling of supervisory unions rather than the districts themselves, there was no straightforward way to calculate the selection probability for each sampled school district in a supervisory union. Instead, the selection probability for these districts was estimated by simulating the sampling process 1,000 times. The simulation procedure was carried out separately for the high poverty stratum and the low poverty stratum.

At the outset of each chapter, key research questions to be addressed in the remainder of the chapter are identified. Results of the analysis are presented in tables accompanied by interpretive text. Most results are cross-tabulated by district size, program participation, and district poverty level. When appropriate, results are also cross-tabulated by school type and the type of menu planning system being used. These measures and their subgroups are defined as follows:

- *School district enrollment* (as of October 31, 1998):
  - Less than 1,000
  - 1,000 to 4,900
  - 5,000 to 24,900
  - 25,000 or more
- *Program participation* (School Year 1998/99):
  - Both NSLP and SBP
  - NSLP only

- *District poverty level* (share of district enrollment approved for free and reduced price meals as of October 31, 1998):
  - High (>60%)
  - Medium (31-60%)
  - Low ($\leq$ 30%)
- *School type*:
  - Elementary – Schools composed of any span of grades not above Grade 8.
  - Middle/secondary – Schools that have no grade lower than Grade 6 and continue through Grade 12
  - Other schools – Schools that include grade spans other than those defined above, including, for example, schools with a K-12 grade span.
- *Menu planning systems*:
  - Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP)
  - Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (ANSMP)
  - Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning
  - Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning
  - Other menu planning systems

To assess the statistical significance of differences between subgroups of school districts, t-tests were performed for certain variables. Between group differences that were found to be significant at the .01 and the .05 levels are reported. However, discussion is largely confined to variables that exhibit a difference between subgroups that is statistically significant at the .01 level. This approach compensates for the possibility of finding significant differences by chance alone when conducting multiple t-tests.

Research Questions

A series of research questions for each of the two primary objectives of the report provided the overall framework for analysis of the survey data. The objectives and their associated research questions are as follows:

Objective 1 – Implementation of the School Meals Initiative

For School Food Authorities:

- Which menu planning options (or combination of options) are SFAs now using and how has this changed since last school year?
- What is the current status of implementation?
  - If nutrient analysis of recipes and menus is being conducted:
  - What procedures are being used?
  - Is the analysis weighted or unweighted?
  - Have lunches and breakfasts been combined?
  - How often are menus re-analyzed?
- To what degree has performance of the following tasks required for implementation of NSMP been a burden to the school food directors and staff:
  - Obtaining nutrient data for foods not in the database?
  - Obtaining reimbursable meal serving information for weighted analysis?
  - Standardizing recipes?
  - Meeting all the required nutrient standards?
  - Acceptability of food items, menu items, recipes, and menus?
  - Skill/training requirements?
- Do SFAs disclose the nutrient content of the meals they serve? If so, what form does the disclosure take?
- Compared to last year, what changes have SFAs made with regard to:
  - Use of menu cycles?
  - Use of self-serve foods (salad bars/theme bars, etc.)?
  - Availability of a la carte foods?
  - Number of menu choices?
  - Portion sizes offered (including tailoring portion size to age category)?

- Compared to last year, what changes have SFAs made in recipes and food preparation techniques?
  - Use of standardized recipes?
  - Use of USDA quantity and NSMP recipes?
  - Time devoted to recording food production information?
  - Modify recipes to decrease fat/sodium?
  - Change food preparation techniques to decrease fat?

- Compared to last year, what changes have SFAs made in food procurement?
  - Purchase of fresh fruits/vegetables?
  - Purchase of prepared, convenience foods?
  - Use of USDA donated commodities?
  - Purchase of low-fat/reduced-fat foods?
  - Requiring nutrition information from vendors?
  - Use and content of product specifications?
  - Use of purchasing cooperatives?

For State Agencies:

- How many SFAs within each State are using each of the authorized menu planning options (or combinations of options)?
- What role has the State played in assisting public SFAs in the selection and implementation of new menu planning systems?
- Have State agencies offered general training sessions to SFAs to present the various menu planning options? If so, how many sessions were held and how many SFAs have been trained?
- Have State agencies provided public SFAs with nutritional expertise? With computer expertise? With on-site technical assistance?
- Have State agencies developed plans and procedures to provide ANSMP to SFAs in their States? Are the State agency staffs responsible for this or are they using outside resources?
- How are States monitoring SFA compliance with the School Meals Initiative? How many school sites have been reviewed? Are State Agencies conducting SMI reviews and Coordinated Review Efforts (CRE) Administrative Reviews simultaneously?

- To what extent have notifications been required due to SFAs not satisfying program requirements?

Objective 2 – Special Issues

For School Food Authorities

- For those SFAs contracting with a food service management company (FSMC) for food service:
  - Is the respondent (school food director) employed by the FSMC or by the school district?
  - From a list of specified food service functions, which ones are performed by the FSMC, the school district, or jointly?
  - On what basis is the FSMC fee determined? When these fees are computed on a per-meal basis, are a la carte and snack foods included and if so, how are they converted to a meal equivalent basis?
  - Who at the SFA is responsible for monitoring FSMC performance?
  - Does the school district periodically verify the accuracy of the meal count claimed by the FSMC?

- How many SFAs use direct certification of children in Food Stamp (FS), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) households to qualify for free meal eligibility?
- For those SFAs that use direct certification with information provided by the State:
  - Does the State contact the qualifying households directly or do they send the SFA a list for use in certifying students?
  - When the SFA receives a list of eligible students from the State, does the SFA send a letter of notification to the household and, if they do, are households required to return the letter to become certified?

- In how many school districts are after-school care programs being held? For those school districts providing after-school care:
  - How many schools are providing this care?
  - Who are the principal sponsors?
  - How many children participate in these programs?

  - To what extent is food served to participants in these programs? For those that provide food, are they snacks or meals, who is responsible for food preparation, and do they receive Federal reimbursement for the food service?

- How many school districts have "charter schools" operating within their systems? For those that do, who administers their food service programs?
- What types of meal counting systems are being used by school districts to determine the number of reimbursable meals that are served each day?
- How many school districts have someone at the point of service check each child to determine that the food they have taken qualifies as a reimbursable meal? And if someone checks, what action do they take when the food items do not qualify as a reimbursable meal?
- How many school districts review their meal counts to ensure their accuracy and how are these reviews conducted?
- How many school districts donate leftover food to charitable institutions and with what frequency?
- How many school food directors have access to the Internet, at work or at home, and with what frequency is it used?
- How many school districts are operating schools under the special assistance alternatives (Provisions I, II, and III) to the normal requirements for annual eligibility determinations and daily meal counts, and for those districts that are, how many schools are participating?

For State Agencies

- How many States operate a system for the direct certification of children in households in the FS, TANF, and FDPIR for free meals?
- For those States that operate a direct certification system: which State agency is responsible, how often are lists developed, and are qualifying households contacted by the State or is the information forwarded to SFA's for action?
- For those States that do not operate a direct certification system, are SFAs provided technical assistance on how to conduct direct certification locally?
- How many States prohibit the use of Food Service Management companies (FSMCs) in managing school food service programs?

- For those States within which SFAs are presently contracting with FSMCs to manage their food service operations:
  - How many State Agencies require FSMCs to register with the State? And for those that do, how many FSMCs are currently registered?
  - How many State Agencies review the contracts with FSMCs and for those that do, is it done pre-award or post-award?
  - How many State Agencies provide technical assistance to SFAs in contracting with FSMCs and in what forms?

- For those State Agencies that have "charter schools" operating within school districts in their states:
  - How many charter schools are participating in the NSLP?
  - Who operates the food service program in these schools, the charter school itself or the school district within which it is located?
  - How many States grant charter schools that operate their own food service a separate legal authority to function as a "school food authority" and how many charter schools have been granted SFA status?

- For those State Agencies that provide their SFAs with some form of assistance in the procurement of goods and services:
  - In what form is this assistance provided and what topics have been treated within the past two years?
  - Does the State conduct periodic oversight of SFA local procurement?
  - How many State Agencies promote the use of cooperative purchasing under State auspices and for those that do, which State Agency is responsible for procurement and how many SFAs participate in State-managed procurement?

- What forms of financial management assistance are State Agencies providing to SFAs?
- How many SFAs were the subject of State-conducted organization-wide financial and compliance audits during SY 1997/98, how many of those audited required State Agency attention to resolve problems, and how long did it take to resolve these problems?

- How many State Agencies receive copies of the Local Education Agency cost allocation plans for the SFAs in their State?
- How many State Agencies have contracted employees on their staffs? For those that do how many, by type of contract?
- What types of services do State Agencies contract for?

CHAPTER III: SCHOOL DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of a few key measures of the operations and characteristics of the public schools and school districts participating in the US Department of Agriculture's school meals programs in SY 1998/99.

This information serves a couple of purposes. First, it offers an up-dated snapshot of major dimensions of the program. In several of the tables that appear below, we compare the national estimates for SY 1998/99 with the estimates that appeared in the First Year Report for SY 1997/98. These comparisons are suggestive of the trends that are occurring in these parameters.

A second purpose of the information included in this chapter is to provide the reader with a basis for interpreting the results that appear elsewhere in this report. Many of these results are arrayed by the same breakdown of district characteristics that appears in the tables below. With the information contained in this chapter, it is therefore possible to determine the distribution of key parameters – e.g. number of school districts, schools, and students – among the resulting outcomes.

For this purpose, national estimates are provided for:

- Number of schools and school districts.
- Student enrollment.
- Students approved for free and reduced price meals.
- Number of meals served (free, reduced and full price).
- Student participation in the school meals program.

Schools and School Districts in the NSLP/SBP

Results of the Second Year survey indicate that there were about 13,115 public school districts operating more than 82,000 public schools taking part in the NSLP in the 50 States and the District of Columbia in SY 1998/99. The estimated number of schools is only about 0.2% below the number reported by FNS on the basis of its administrative records.

As indicated in Tables III-1 and through III-3, school districts of less than 5,000 enrollment account for more than 85% of the total number of districts but only 45% of the number of schools and 33.8% of total enrollment. At the other extreme, there are around 230 school districts with an enrollment of 25,000 or more. While these districts account for less than 2% of the total number of districts, they operate nearly one-quarter (24.1%) of all schools and enroll nearly one-third (31.4%) of all students.

Table III-1: Comparison of NSLP School District Characteristics in SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	SY 1997/98	SY 1998/99
	(percent)	(percent)
District size[1]		
Less than 1,000	43.1	42.4
1,000 – 4,999	41.6	43.3
5,000 – 24,999	13.5	12.6
25,000 or more	1.8	1.8
Program participation		
NSLP and SBP	74.9	74.9
NSLP only	25.1	25.1
District poverty level[2]		
High (>60% f&r)	15.5	17.3
Medium (31-60% f&r)	38.9	37.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	45.6	45.6
	(number)	(number)
Total number of districts	13,503	13,115

[1] Total school district enrollment as of October 31 in the respective school years.

[2] Represented by the share of total enrollment in the respective school years approved for free and reduced-price (f&r) meals.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000 and *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Not surprisingly, the distribution of school districts by district characteristic (Table III-1) changed very little between SYs1997/98 and 1998/99. Though the change was slight, it is noteworthy that the number of districts in the smallest size class (less than 1,000 enrollment) dropped below the number in the next largest size class for the first time. As recently as SY 1989/90, the smallest size class held a commanding 49.5% versus 36.5% lead over the next size class in terms of the number of districts.

There was also a slight shift in the distribution of districts by poverty level (as represented by the share of enrollment qualifying for free and reduced price meals). Around 250 districts moved from the medium poverty category to the high poverty category. As noted later in this chapter, Second Year survey results estimated a slight increase in the share of overall enrollment approved for free and reduced price meals. This contrasts with FNS administrative records that register a small decline between these years.

Nearly three-quarters (74.9%) of all districts offer their students both lunch and breakfast. The remaining districts participate only in the NSLP. Of the total number of schools in districts that take part in the NSLP, a very small share participate exclusively in the SBP (0.6%) or in neither the NSLP nor the SBP (0.8%).

The distribution of school districts, schools, and students among the three poverty levels (low, medium, and high) is roughly 40/40/20 for all three measures. To the extent there is any deviation, there is a slightly larger share of districts (45.6%) in the low poverty category and a slightly larger share of total enrollment (21.2%) in the high poverty category.

A three-part system of classifying schools by grade level was used in this study. They were classified as "elementary," "middle/secondary," or "other." The "other" schools are those that include grade spans other than those defined as elementary (any span not above Grade 8) or middle/secondary (no grade lower than Grade 6 and through Grade 12). A school with Kindergarten through Grade 12 would be classified as an "other" school, for example.

As indicated in Table III-2, 84% of all school districts include at least one elementary school and 74.2% include one or more middle/secondary schools. There are nearly twice as many elementary schools as middle/secondary schools (49,000 versus 26,000, roughly) though elementary schools have an average enrollment that is only 60% that of the average enrollment of middle/secondary schools (469 versus 784). As a result, total enrollment is divided somewhat more evenly with elementary schools accounting for 50%, middle/secondary schools for 45%, and "other" schools for the remaining 5%.

Table III-2: Number of Public NSLP Schools and School Districts by Selected District Characteristics and School Type, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	Schools		School districts	
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total
All districts	82,239	100.0	13,115	100.0
District size[1/]				
Less than 1,000	10,022	12.2	5,520	42.4
1,000 – 4,999	26,917	32.8	5,636	43.3
5,000 – 24,999	25,374	30.9	1,635	12.6
25,000 or more	19,739	24.1	232	1.8
Program participation				
NSLP and SBP	59,631	70.6	9,370	74.9
NSLP only	23,612	28.0	3,139	25.1
SBP only	535	0.6	--	--
Neither NSLP nor SBP	641	0.8	--	--
District poverty level[2/]				
High (>60% f&r)	16,977	20.7	2,258	17.3
Medium (31-60% f&r)	32,637	39.8	4,824	37.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	32,439	39.5	5,941	45.6
School type [3/]				
Elementary	48,698	60.2	11,017	84.0
Middle/secondary	26,067	32.2	9,726	74.2
Other	6,081	7.5	3,569	27.2

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

[3/] For school districts, number of school districts and percent of all school districts that include schools of the respective type. For example, 11,017 school districts (84.0 % of the total) include elementary schools.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report,* 2001.

Table III-3: Student Enrollment in Public NSLP School Districts by Selected District Characteristics and School Type, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	Student enrollment	
	Total	Share of total
	(thousand)	(percent)
All districts	46,064	100.0
District size[1]		
Less than 1,000	2,468	5.4
1,000 – 4,999	13,093	28.4
5,000 – 24,999	16,017	34.8
25,000 or more	14,486	31.4
Program participation		
NSLP and SBP	39,172	87.5
NSLP only	5,571	12.5
District poverty level[2]		
High (>60% f&r)	9,754	21.2
Medium (31-60% f&r)	17,730	38.5
Low (≤30% f&r)	18,580	40.3
School type		
Elementary	22,816	50.1
Middle/secondary	20,434	44.9
Other	2,309	5.1

[1] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report,* 2001.

The cross-classification of districts appearing in Table III-4 is revealing in a couple respects. As might be expected, since participation in the breakfast program has been proportionately higher in high poverty areas, the vast majority (71%) of all districts that limit their participation to the lunch program are in low poverty areas. Nearly all of these districts are in the smaller size categories as well, with over half (51%) having an enrollment of less than 1,000. It is also noteworthy that the incidence of high poverty is nearly as great among the smallest districts (23%) as it is among the largest districts (24%).

Table III-4: Number of Public NSLP School Districts by Key District Characteristics SY 1998/99

District size[1]	Program participation				District poverty level[2]					
	NSLP & SBP		NSLP only		High (>60% f&r)		Medium (31-60% f&r)		Low (≤30% f&r)	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Less than 1,000	3,610	38.7	1,592	51.0	1,243	55.0	2,232	46.3	2,045	34.4
1,000 - 4,999	4,101	43.9	1,321	42.3	724	32.0	1,838	38.1	3,075	51.8
5,000 – 24,999	1,410	15.1	204	6.5	236	10.4	643	13.3	755	12.7
25,000 or more	218	2.3	6	0.2	56	2.5	111	2.3	65	1.1
Total	9,339	100.0	3,123	100.0	2,259	100.0	4,824	100.0	5,940	100.0
Program participation										
NSLP and SBP					1,835	87.5	4,001	86.1	3,504	61.3
NSLP only					262	12.5	646	13.9	2,214	38.7
Total					2,097	100.0	4,647	100.0	5,718	100.0

[1] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Student Participation

Lunches

An estimated 4 billion lunches were served to students attending public schools participating in the NSLP in SY 1997/98. This is about 5% less than the number of lunches measured by FNS through its administrative records.[1] Of the total number, nearly half (47.6%) were served free while 42.8% were full price and 9.6% were reduced price.

Consistent with earlier findings, free lunches account for a much larger share of the total among the largest districts, those districts that participate in both the NSLP and the SBP, and in the poorest districts. Conversely, the incidence of full-price lunches is greatest among the smallest districts, those that provide lunch only, and those with the lowest level of poverty.[2]

Table III-5: Number of NSLP Lunches Served in Public NSLP School Districts by Type of Meal and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1997/98

District characteristics	Full-price		Reduced-price		Free		Total	
	Number (million)	Percent	Number (million)	Percent	Number (million)	Percent	Number (million)	Percent
All districts	1,717	42.8	383	9.6	1,911	47.6	4,012	100.0
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	135	54.5	24	9.6	88	35.9	247	100.0
1,000 – 4,999	607	52.9**	92	8.0**	449	39.1**	1,148	100.0
5,000 – 24,999	621	44.5*	170	12.2**	605	43.3**	1,397	100.0
25,000 or more	354	29.0**	97	8.0	768	63.0**	1,219	100.0
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	1,428	40.1	354	10.0	1,776	49.9	3,558	100.0
NSLP only	289	63.8**	29	6.4**	135	29.8**	454	100.0
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	166	16.6	72	7.2	764	76.2	1,003	100.0
Medium (31-60% f&r)	632	39.7**	156	9.8**	804	50.5**	1,592	100.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	919	64.9**	155	11.0**	341	24.1**	1,415	100.0

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

** Between group differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; program participation – NSLP and SBP; poverty level – high.

* Between group differences significant at the .05 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; program participation – NSLP and SBP; poverty level – high.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

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[1] After excluding lunches served to children participating in the NSLP outside the 50 States and in private schools, USDA's administrative records indicate that about 4,210 million lunches were served in SY 1997/98.

[2] Poverty is measured in the report in terms of the share of total enrollment that is approved for free and reduced price meals. This measure is frequently used in studies of primary and secondary education. A close, positive relationship between this measure and the share of meals that is served free and at reduced price is therefore to be expected.

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Table III-6: Comparison of the Distribution of Lunches Served by Type of Meal and by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1996/97 and 1997/98

District characteristics	Full-Price		Reduced-Price		Free		Total Number	
	1996/97	1997/98	1996/97	1997/98	1996/97	1997/98	1996/97	1997/98
	----------------------------(percent)----------------------------						----(million)----	
All districts	43.2	42.8	8.4	9.6	48.4	47.6	4,167	4,012
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	54.4	54.5	10.0	9.6	35.7	35.9	269	247
1,000 – 4,999	52.5**	52.9**	8.5**	8.0**	39.0**	39.1**	1,136	1,148
5,000 – 24,999	46.0**	44.5*	8.2**	12.2**	45.8**	43.3**	1,486	1,397
25,000 or more	29.5**	29.0**	8.0**	8.0	62.5**	63.0**	1,277	1,219
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	40.6	40.1	8.5	10.0	50.9	49.9	3,797	3,558
NSLP only	70.2**	63.8**	7.0**	6.4**	22.8**	29.8**	370	454
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	16.8	16.6	7.5	7.2	75.7	76.2	1,093	1,003
Medium (31-60% f&r)	40.2**	39.7**	9.6**	9.8**	50.2**	50.5**	1,701	1,592
Low (≤30% f&r)	68.0**	64.9**	7.6**	11.0**	24.5**	24.1**	1,373	1,415

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

** Between group differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; program participation – NSLP and SBP; poverty level – high.

* Between group differences significant at the .05 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; program participation – NSLP and SBP; poverty level – high.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

A comparison of the distribution of lunches by type of meal (i.e. free, reduced-price, and full price) in SYs 1996/97 and 1997/98 reveals little change. Some increase in the share of reduced price lunches, especially in the low-poverty districts, is indicated.

It should be noted that some school districts do not charge any of their students for meals, regardless of whether they meet the eligibility criteria for free or reduced-priced meals. This includes school districts participating in the so-called "Provision II and III" alternatives to annual determinations of eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. These alternatives are provided as a means of streamlining program administration at the State and district levels.

A few States are also experimenting on a pilot basis with free "universal" breakfast programs. But even in those schools, Federal reimbursement is still based on the free/reduced-price/paid categories even though the child is not paying for the meal. A Congressionally mandated 3-year pilot project for universal school breakfasts also began in six school districts in SY 2000/01. In this pilot, all breakfasts served in the "treatment" schools are reimbursed at the free rate.

Breakfasts

On the basis of this survey, it is estimated that about 1 billion breakfasts were served in SY 1997/98 to students attending public NSLP school districts in the 50 States and the District of Columbia. Of this number, most were free (77.5%) or reduced-price (7.6%).

The concentration of breakfasts in the high poverty school districts is dramatic. While these districts account for only 21% of total enrollment in all NSLP districts, they account for nearly double this share (39%) of all breakfasts served. As with lunches, there is little evidence of change between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99 in the distribution of breakfasts served when compared by district size or poverty level.

Table III-7: Number of SBP Breakfasts Served in Public NSLP School Districts by Type of Meal and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1997/98

District characteristics	Full-price		Reduced-price		Free		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	(million)		(million)		(million)		(million)	
All districts	144	14.9	74	7.6	751	77.5	970	100.0
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	12	24.6	6	11.4	32	63.9	51	100.0
1,000 – 4,999	40	17.7**	19	8.3**	168	74.0**	227	100.0
5,000 – 24,999	54	16.9**	28	8.7**	238	74.4**	320	100.0
25,000 or more	38	10.2**	21	5.7**	313	84.1**	372	100.0
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	30	7.8	21	5.6	330	86.7	380	100.0
Medium (31-60% f&r)	69	15.8**	38	8.7**	329	75.5**	436	100.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	46	29.9**	15	9.8**	92	60.3**	153	100.0

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

** Between group differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; poverty level – high.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table III-8: Comparison of the Distribution of Breakfasts Served by Type of Meal and by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1996/97 and 1997/98

District characteristics	Full-price		Reduced-price		Free		Total Number	
	1996/97	1997/98	1996/97	1997/98	1996/97	1997/98	1996/97	1997/98
	(percent)						(million)	
All districts	14.6	14.9	7.0	7.6	78.4	77.5	1,059	970
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	23.7	24.6	10.6	11.4	65.7	63.9	57	51
1,000 – 4,999	18.7**	17.7**	8.1**	8.3	73.2**	74.0**	248	227
5,000 – 24,999	15.8**	16.9**	7.0**	8.7	77.2**	74.4**	363	320
25,000 or more	9.6**	10.2**	5.6**	5.7	84.8**	84.1**	390	372
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	6.7	7.8	5.0	5.6	88.4	86.7	407	380
Medium (31-60%	16.3**	15.8**	7.6**	8.7	76.0**	75.5**	480	436
Low (<30% f&r)	28.9**	29.9**	9.8**	9.8	62.3**	60.3**	171	153

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

** Between group differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; poverty level – high.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Students Approved for Free and Reduced Price Meals

Of the 46.1 million children enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in SY 1998/99, 16.4 million or 35.5% of the total were approved to receive free meals. Another 3.4 million (7.3% of the total) were approved to receive reduced-price meals. These shares are slightly higher than the 33.7% and 7.1%, respectively, estimated by FNS on the basis of October 1998 administrative records for all school districts participating in the NSLP.

Table III-9: Share of Total Enrollment in Public NSLP School Districts Approved to Receive Free and Reduced Price Meals by Selected District Characteristics, and School Type, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	1997/98			1998/99		
	Free approvals	Reduced-price approvals	Total Enrollment	Free approvals	Reduced-price approvals	Total Enrollment
	(percent of enrollment)		(thousand)	(percent of enrollment)		(thousand)
All districts	32.6	6.9	48,227	35.5	7.3	46,064
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	28.8	9.0	2,525	30.7	9.4	2,468
1,000 - 4,999	25.8**	6.7**	13,028	26.7**	7.0**	13,093
5,000 - 24,999	29.7**	6.6**	17,491	36.6**	7.6**	16,017
25,000 or more	42.4**	7.1**	15,183	43.0**	7.0**	14,486
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	34.9	7.2	43,031	36.9	7.5	39,172
NSLP only	13.4**	4.6**	5,196	24.8**	6.2**	5,571
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	63.1	8.2	10,132	76.3	9.7	9,754
Medium (31-60% f&r)	36.4**	8.3**	18,134	36.1**	8.5**	17,730
Low (≤30% f&r)	13.7**	5.0**	19,961	13.4**	5.0**	18,580
School type						
Elementary	39.4	8.0	24,105	44.4	8.8	22,816
Middle/secondary	25.1**	5.7**	21,728	26.6**	5.9**	20,434
Other	32.2**	7.2**	2,394	24.7**	6.1	2,309

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

** Between group differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; program participation – NSLP and SBP; poverty level – high; school type - elementary.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

CHAPTER IV: OVERALL STATUS OF THE SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

The *SMI Implementation Study: First Year Report* (1999) represented the first comprehensive assessment of SMI and its initial impact since its start of operation in modified form in SY 1996/97.[1] This chapter will focus on the continuing progress made by school districts in implementing the changes required by the SMI.

Without doubt, the SMI is the most far-reaching change to be made in the school meals program since its enactment in 1946. The changes that have accompanied the SMI have impacted nearly every major interest in the system from the kids who eat the meals to the cooks who prepare them, from the school food staff who plan the menus and buy the food to the State and Federal agencies that administer the programs.

Arriving at the SMI

When the NSLP began shortly after World War II, school meal requirements were aimed at ensuring that children got enough to eat, including a balanced diet of nutritious foods. Schools participating in the NSLP were required to meet certain "meal patterns" which included minimum amounts of five principal components: meat or meat alternate, bread/grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk. Different size helpings of each component were specified for each of five age/grade categories.

The prescribed types and quantities of components for a school lunch for grades 4 to 12 are shown in Table IV-1. Comparable tables are available for other grades and for school breakfasts.

In the early 1990's, it was determined that the excessive consumption of certain foods was having harmful effects on the health of Americans, including children. An assessment of the nutritional content of the school lunch and school breakfast programs conducted in early 1992 revealed that, on balance, the meals provided through these programs were not in conformance with the Federally-established Dietary Guidelines.[1] So over the next few years, the USDA and Congress cooperatively worked to develop what is now the SMI.

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[1] With the approval of their State administering agency, school districts could be granted waivers to postpone implementation until no later than SY1998/99.

Table IV-1: Traditional Meal Pattern Requirements for the National School Lunch Program, Grades 4-12

Meal Components	Minimum Required Serving
Meat or meat alternate	*1 serving per meal*
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	2 oz.
Cheese	2 oz.
Large egg(s)	1 serving
Cooked dry beans or peas	½ cup
Peanut butter	4 tbsp.
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds	1 oz. = ½ the requirement
Vegetables, fruits and/or full-strength juices[1/]	*2 or more servings per meal, ¾ cup total portion*
Bread/Grains	*1 or more servings per meal/8 servings per week*
Enriched or whole-grain bread	1 slice
Enriched or whole-grain biscuit, muffin, roll or equivalent	1 serving
Cooked enriched or whole grain rice, macaroni, noodles, or other cereal grains such as bulgur or corn grits	½ cup
Milk	*1 serving per meal*
Fluid milk (whole milk and low fat milk must be offered daily)	½ pint (8 fluid oz.)

[1/] No more than one-half of the total requirement may be met with full-strength fruit or vegetable juice.
Source: USDA

Elements of the School Meals Initiative

At its core, the SMI does two things:

1) It establishes a set of dietary objectives against which the performance of school meals can be objectively measured, and

2) It identifies alternative menu planning systems that schools can employ in accomplishing these objectives.

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[1] Burghardt, J.; Gordon, A.; Chapman, N.; Gleason, P.; Fraker, T., *The School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study: School Food Service, Meals Offered, and Dietary Intakes*, FNS/USDA, October 1993.

For its dietary objectives, the Department adopted a subset of both the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The RDAs served as a basis for design of the meal requirements for the traditional school meals programs. As such, they have helped shape the composition of school meals for many years. And school meals have been largely successful in meeting the nutrient targets of the RDAs.

Adoption of the Dietary Guidelines as an objective of school meals brings a significant new dimension to bear on the program, one that speaks directly to the programs' past nutritional shortcomings. The Dietary Guidelines were developed jointly by the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services as a means of providing general guidance to Americans on the essential components of a healthy diet. They are based on the best available scientific and medical knowledge. By law, they must be reviewed by a panel of experts every five years and amended as necessary. As a result, the guidelines were updated in 1985, 1990, 1995, and 2000.

The Dietary Guidelines issued in 2000 recommend that Americans:

- Aim for a healthy weight
- Be physically active each day
- Let the Pyramid guide your food choices
- Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily
- Keep food safe to eat
- Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat (less than 10% of calories) and cholesterol and moderate in total fat (no more than 30% of calories)
- Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation

New Approaches to Menu Planning

Through a combination of USDA proposals and Congressional mandates, four alternative approaches to menu planning were developed and were available to schools participating in the NSLP in SY 1998/99. Three are new while the fourth, as required by law, is the system that has been in use since the beginning of the program. A final rule on a fifth alternative described in the Healthy Meals for Children Act as "any reasonable approach" became effective June 8, 2000. The development of these options was driven by several principles, including the following:

- to apply a uniform set of upgraded nutritional objectives to all the menu planning options;
- increased flexibility in the choice and combination of foods;
- to focus on the nutritional composition of meals rather than on meal components and food items;
- providing meals that adhere more closely to the nutritional differences of different student age groups;
- to take advantage of computer technology while recognizing the diversity of technical capability that exists among school districts;
- recognition that nutritional objectives are not to be met by individual foods or even in a given meal, but over a period time;
- recognition that changes in menu planning of this complexity can not be accomplished "over night," but must be phased-in overtime.

The two approaches that represent the most significant departure from the old system are Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP) and Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (ANSMP). These systems are dependent on the use of computerized nutrient analysis and the use of USDA-approved software in conducting this analysis. The only difference between these approaches is that under NSMP, the school district itself is responsible for conducting its own nutrient analysis while under ANSMP, this analysis is conducted by another entity (e.g. the State Child Nutrition Agency or another school district) on behalf of the school district.

The other two menu planning options – Traditional Food-Based (TFB) and Enhanced Food-Based (EFB) – are food-based in the sense that meals are defined in terms of specific types and quantities of food, as in the old system.

The four menu planning options are compared in Table IV-2. It will be noted that some features are the same regardless of which option the district chooses to follow. All districts must satisfy the same nutrition goals. Also, all districts must maintain records on the processed foods they use, their food production, and menus. These records are for use by the

State agencies when they periodically review each district's menu planning procedures. State agencies are required to do nutritional analysis whenever it is not being done by the district or by someone else for the district. Thus, for many of those districts that use a food-based system, the State agency is dependent on these records to conduct its own nutritional analysis to use in gauging the district's performance in achieving its nutrition goals. For NSMP and ANSMP districts and other districts that conduct their own nutrient analysis, the records are used by the State agency in reviewing the district's analytic procedures and confirming their results.

The principal differences among the menu planning options for the NSLP (those for the SBP are different) are in the age/grade groups that are used, the structure and definition of a reimbursable meal, and, of course, responsibility for conducting nutrient analysis. With the exception of the Traditional Food-Based system, the age/grade groupings have been updated to better reflect the nutritional requirements of children of different ages.[1] NSMP and ANSMP group grades K-6 and 7-12 with an optional standard for schools that split grades K-6 between the third and fourth grades. As an option to using grades, schools using these menu planning systems may use ages instead. The suggested age breaks are: 3-6, 7-10, 11-13, and 14 and older. Alternatively, NSMP and ANSMP schools may also customize their age groups. The enhanced food-based system uses the same grade breaks as NSMP and ANSMP, though no breakdown by age is provided. Schools using the traditional food-based system continue to use the same grade groupings that were used in the past, i.e. K-3 and 4-12 with an option for schools with grades 7-12.

The structure of the meal and the way in which reimbursable meals are defined are still tied to the quantities and types of food under the two food-based systems. The composition of the meal in the Enhanced Food-Based system has been modified ("enhanced") to enable districts to more readily meet the nutritional goals of the program. More specifically, the Enhanced system requires more and/or larger servings of grains, breads, vegetables, and fruits. Under NSMP and ANSMP, a reimbursable meal offered to the student must include at least three menu items with an entrée, fluid milk, and at least one side dish.

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[1] Nutrient requirements undergo an especially large jump between the ages of 10 and 11 (Grades 5 and 6). This dividing line is better reflected in the new groupings.

Table IV-2: Major Features of Alternative Menu Planning Systems for Lunches

Topic	Traditional	Enhanced	NSMP	ANSMP
Nutrition goals	------------------One-third of RDAs; dietary guidelines (averaged over school week)------------------			
Age/grade groups	Grades K-3 and 4-12 Option: Grades 7-12	Grades K-6 and 7-12 Option: K-3	Grades K-6 and 7-12 Option: K-3 Option: ages 3-6, 7-10, 11-13, 14 and older Option: customized age groups	Grades K-6 and 7-12 Option: K-3 Option: ages 3-6, 7-10, 11-13, 14 and older Option: customized age groups
Reimbursable meal	Four food components/five food items	Four food components/five food items	At least three menu items	At least three menu items
Meal structure	Specified quantities for each grade category for each of four meal components	Specified quantities for each grade category for each of four meal components	Entrée, fluid milk, and at least one side dish	Entrée, fluid milk, and at least one side dish
Offer versus serve	Required for high school; high school students must choose no fewer than three of five food items		Required for high school; must select at least two of three menu items, one of them the entrée; if more than three menu items, may decline no more than two	Required for high school; must select at least two of three menu items, one of them the entrée; if more than three menu items, may decline no more than two
Standardized recipes	Record and copy of recipes used must be available during review		Required for all new menu items with two or more ingredients or that require preparation	Required for all new menu items with two or more ingredients or that require preparation
Processed foods	------------------------------------Record of products used to be kept on file------------------------------------			
Production records	----------------------------------Food production and menu records kept on file----------------------------------			
Computerized nutrient analysis	Not required		Conducted by district using USDA approved software	Conducted by another entity on behalf of district using USDA approved software

Source: USDA, FNS, *A Menu Planner for Healthy School Meals*, FNS 303, 1998

Research Questions

The central purpose of this chapter, as noted above, is to describe the overall status of the SMI as of SY 1998/99. This is accomplished by addressing the following research questions:

- How many schools and how many school districts have adopted each of the menu planning options and how has this changed over the past year? To what extent are school districts using more than one system among the schools in their districts? Are there significant differences in the use of menu planning systems on the basis of district characteristics?
- How far have school districts progressed toward full implementation of their chosen menu planning option and how did this change between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99? Are there significant differences in the level of progress by district characteristics, including the menu planning system that is being used?
- What are the intentions of those school districts that are now using food-based menu planning systems with regard to the adoption of nutrient standard menu planning? Do they have different plans for elementary schools and middle/secondary schools? To what extent were there changes in expectations between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99? Are there significant differences in intentions on the basis of district characteristics?

Use of Menu Planning Systems

As indicated earlier, the SMI provides school districts with four menu planning options that are specified in considerable detail as well as a fifth option for "any reasonable approach." Though it is expected that most school districts will select one of these options and use it in all schools throughout the district, some districts might choose to use more than one menu planning system, at least temporarily. For example, a district might choose to use one system in its elementary schools and another in its middle/secondary schools. Alternatively, some districts might choose to gradually phase in nutrient standard menu planning, leaving some schools in the traditional food-based system for the time being. Still other districts might wish to experiment with two or more of the options before deciding which one better serves their needs.

Survey findings for SY 1998/99 indicate that a large majority of both school districts (80.1%) and schools (71.1%) were using one of the food-based systems. This distribution closely parallels the distribution observed in SY 1997/98. Not all districts were using one system to the exclusion of the others. Of all districts reporting in SY 1998/99, 4.5% were using more than one menu planning system, down slightly from 5.8% in SY 1997/98. Within the food-based category, results indicate that slightly less than twice as many districts were using the traditional approach as were using the enhanced approach (51.3% versus 28.8%). As discussed below, this finding is puzzling in that it contradicts evidence from other sources indicating that the enhanced system is more widely used. Use of the traditional system by school districts decreased slightly across most district characteristics, while use of the enhanced system by districts increased slightly across most district characteristics.

The NSMP approach was being used by about one-fifth (20.3%) of all districts while ANSMP was being used by only 3.4% of all districts. NSMP is more likely to be used by larger districts and this relationship appears to be growing stronger.

When compared on the basis of schools rather than school districts (Table IV-4), a somewhat larger share use NSMP and a somewhat smaller share use Traditional Food-Based. This is due to the greater likelihood that larger school districts will use the NSMP approach and the smaller likelihood that they will use Traditional Food-Based. Still, for every two of the largest districts (25,000 or more) that use a nutrient standard system, there are more than three that use a food-based system.

Only 3.4% of all districts and 1.9% of all schools use ANSMP, the same as in SY 1997/98. Not surprisingly, this system is substantially more likely to be found in smaller school districts. The "other" menu planning system is infrequently used. Only about 1.8% of all districts indicated use of a menu planning system other than the four principal systems.

About 500 districts (3.8%) report that their schools are using two menu planning systems while another 80 districts (0.6%) report using more than two systems. For example, while 20.3% of all districts reported use of NSMP in SY 1998/99, only 17.5% reported using this approach exclusively. The remaining districts used NSMP in combination with one or more other menu planning systems. Some districts might be phasing-in to NSMP or ANSMP a few schools at a time. Others might have decided to implement NSMP or ANSMP for some schools (e.g., elementary schools) and not for others. Whatever the reasons, districts report using menu planning systems alone and in combination as follows:

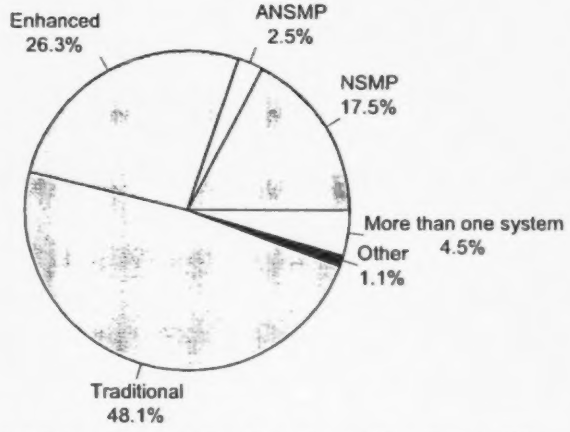
Public NSLP School District Use of Menu Planning Systems, SY 1998/99

	NSMP	ANSMP	Enhanced	Traditional	Other
	------------------	------------------	percent	------------------	------------------
NSMP	17.5				
ANSMP	0.8	2.5			
Enhanced	1.0	0.3	26.3		
Traditional	1.5	0.4	1.8	48.1	
Other	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.4	1.1

Note: The sum of percentages for a given menu planning system might exceed the total percentage shown in Table IV-3 for that system due to double counting. A few school districts (80) reported using more than two menu planning systems in their districts.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Share of Public NSLP School Districts, by Menu Planning System, SY 1998/99



Source: School Meals Initative Implementation Study: Second Year Report, 2001

An estimated 13.8% of all school districts were operating under the direction of a food service management company (FSMC) in SY 1998/99. They were found to be substantially more likely to use NSMP than were districts not using FSMC's (38.1% vs. 17.3%). Conversely, a much smaller share of all FSMC districts used the traditional food-based approach compared to all other districts (30.8% vs. 54.1%).

In addition to collecting information from the responding school districts about their use of menu planning systems, State agencies were asked about the number of SFAs within their respective States that were using each of the systems. This information was collected in SY 1997/98 and again in SY 1998/99 (Table IV-5). For some reason (or reasons) that is not understood, the State agencies report that a substantially larger share of all SFAs are using the enhanced food-based system than the school district responses indicated. Conversely, the State agencies report that a much smaller share are using the traditional food-based system. While the differences narrowed somewhat in SY 1998/99, they remain large.

It does not appear likely that the limited use of imputations for the SFA data would have had this effect. Since the information collected from some State agencies had to be estimated, it is possible that errors resulted from the methods used. It is also possible that the failure to distinguish between public and private schools might have been a source of error in some of the State agency responses. Still, the magnitude of the discrepancy is puzzling.

Table IV-3: Share of Public NSLP School Districts by Type of Menu Planning System and by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	NSMP		ANSMP		Enhanced food-based		Traditional Food-based		Other		Total	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)										(number)	
All districts	19.8	20.3	3.4	3.4	26.5	28.8	54.9	51.3	1.2	1.8	13,503	13,016
District size[2]												
Less than 1,000	18.6	16.4	4.2	5.1	22.6	26.7	57.7	55.6	0.9	1.0	5,820	5,455
1,000 – 4,999	19.0	21.9	2.9	2.5	28.4	28.8	55.2	49.2	1.3	2.1	5,623	5,605
5,000 – 24,999	24.7	25.2	2.4	1.5	33.4	34.5	45.9	44.9	1.4	1.8	1,820	1,632
25,000 or more	31.3	40.1	0.8	0.9	24.6	25.4	47.1	42.7	3.3	4.7	240	232
Program participation												
NSLP and SBP	21.1	21.5	2.9	3.4	24.5	25.4	56.0	53.1	1.4	1.8	10,107	9,333
NSLP only	16.0	17.0	4.7	3.7	32.5	36.4	51.6	46.0	0.5	1.2	3,396	3,125
District poverty level[3]												
High (>60% f&r)	18.7	16.7	5.1	4.9	19.6	21.2	60.4	59.7	2.9	2.7	2,099	2,246
Medium (31-60% f&r)	22.4	24.0	3.4	4.3	26.5	23.0	52.9	52.9	1.0	1.7	5,252	4,787
Low (≤30% f&r)	18.0	18.8	2.7	2.1	28.9	35.9	54.6	46.6	0.8	1.1	6,152	5,892
Under direction of food service management company												
Yes	39.2	38.1	4.6	5.2	24.2	29.9	37.4	30.8	1.4	2.2	1,588	1,810
No	17.3	17.3	3.2	3.1	26.8	28.3	57.2	54.1	1.2	1.7	11,915	11,305

[1] Row percentages do not sum to 100.0% because some school districts report using more than one menu planning system.

[2] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[3] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table IV-4: Share of Schools in Public NSLP School Districts by Type of Menu Planning System and by Selected District Characteristics, and School Type, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	NSMP		Assisted NuMenu		Enhanced Food-based		Traditional Food-based		Other		Total	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)										(number)	
All districts	22.8	25.2	1.9	1.9	25.8	26.7	48.4	44.4	1.2	1.8	86,130	85,715
District size[1]												
Less than 1,000	20.1	18.3	4.0	5.7	20.7	25.9	54.5	49.3	0.7	0.8	10,675	11,239
1,000 – 4,999	17.9	22.2	2.3	2.1	26.9	27.6	51.6	46.5	1.3	1.6	27,622	27,799
5,000 – 24,999	24.7	25.4	1.6	1.1	30.2	32.2	42.5	39.8	1.0	1.5	28,009	25,833
25,000 or more	28.3	33.5	0.5	0.5	20.7	19.1	48.8	45.3	1.7	1.6	19,825	19,982
Program participation												
NSLP and SBP	23.4	26.1	1.7	1.6	25.0	25.3	48.5	45.5	1.3	1.5	74,910	70,069
NSLP only	18.3	22.4	3.0	3.3	30.9	34.1	47.1	39.3	0.7	0.8	11,219	12,218
District poverty level[2]												
High (>60% f&r)	20.7	21.7	1.2	1.6	17.4	19.0	59.4	56.0	1.4	1.7	17,522	17,598
Medium (31-60% f&r)	23.5	27.2	1.9	2.3	26.7	25.7	46.2	43.3	1.6	1.5	34,526	34,106
Low (≤30% f&r)	23.1	25.4	2.1	1.6	29.2	32.0	44.8	39.7	0.8	1.4	34,086	33,149
School type												
Elementary	24.0	26.9	1.8	1.7	26.3	27.2	46.5	42.9	1.3	1.2	52,381	50,598
Middle/secondary	21.1	21.8	2.1	1.9	25.8	26.6	50.1	44.1	1.0	5.5	27,559	28,422
Other	19.7	23.9	1.1	1.6	21.3	20.2	56.6	45.9	1.3	8.4	6,188	6,654

[1] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table IV-5: Comparison of the Share of School Districts Using Alternative Menu Planning Options, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Menu planning system	State Agency Survey SY 1997/98	School District Survey SY 1997/98	State Agency Survey SY 1998/99	School District Survey SY 1998/99
	--------(percent)--------			
NSMP	16.2	19.8	16.5	20.3
ANSMP	1.9	3.4	1.3	3.4
Enhanced Food-Based	46.5	26.5	45.4	28.8
Traditional Food-Based	35.3	54.9	38.6	51.3
Other	0.9	1.2	0.8	1.8

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Nutrient-Based Menu Planning for Both Lunch and Breakfast

School food directors in districts using nutrient-based menu planning systems (i.e. NSMP or ANSMP) were asked whether they used these systems for lunch, breakfast, or both. Of the districts using these systems, 92.3% were using it in their lunch programs, while 70.3% were using it in their breakfast programs (Table IV-6). Under USDA guidelines, school districts conducting nutrient analysis have the option of analyzing lunch and breakfast menus separately or analyzing them together using a combined analysis. About a fifth of the districts implementing NSMP/ANSMP in both their lunch and breakfast programs said they perform combined analysis. To perform accurate combined analysis, detailed production records, the number of actual or planned servings, and a la carte sales for both lunch and breakfast menus must be monitored. The relative complexity of combining these two sets of data, particularly if the information for one (e.g. breakfast service) is substantially less complicated, might discourage some districts from using this option and could explain why fewer than one-third (31.8%) of all NSMP/ANSMP districts use it.[1]

Notably, the percentage of high poverty districts performing combined analysis (48.3%) is substantially higher than that of all other districts.

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[1] It is noted that the response rate to this question might have been influenced by question wording in that; 'NSMP' was used to represent both NSMP and ANSMP systems, while respondents could have read the question as referring only to NSMP.

Table IV-6: Number of Public NSLP School Districts Implementing Nutrient Standard Menu Planning or Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning in Lunch and/or Breakfast Programs, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	NSMP/ANSMP in lunch program		NSMP/ANSMP in breakfast program		Nutrient analysis of lunch and breakfast combined	
	Number of districts	Percent of all NSMP/ANSMP districts	Number of districts	Percent of all NSMP/ANSMP districts	Number of Districts	Percent of all NSMP/ANSMP districts serving lunch and breakfast
	---percent of all NSMP/ANSMP districts---					
All districts	2,786	92.3	2,121	70.3	606	31.8
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	983	92.0	740	69.3	241	35.8
1,000 – 4,999	1,286	91.4	971	69.0	254	29.6
5,000 – 24,999	409	95.3	322	75.1	94	31.5
25,000 or more	86	95.6	79	87.8	17	22.7
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	455	98.3	393	84.9	184	48.3
Medium (31-60% f&r)	1,206	93.2	992	76.7	232	26.7
Low (≤30% f&r)	1,103	89.2	727	58.8	190	29.1

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report,* 2001.

Implementation Status

Survey respondents were asked to assess their progress in implementation of the menu planning system they had chosen. They were asked to indicate their progress on a five-point scale that ranged from "have not started" to "fully implemented." When surveyed in SY 1997/98, only about one-third of all school districts indicated their menu planning systems were fully implemented. One year later, in SY 1998/99, over half (55.4%)of all districts indicated reaching full implementation.

Larger districts are somewhat ahead of smaller districts in terms of the share reaching full implementation. Districts using NSMP or one of the food-based approaches (which, collectively, account for nearly all districts) all made impressive gains in moving toward full implementation.

A comparison of how districts described their implementation status in SY 1997/98 and one year later, in SY 1998/99 is revealing in two ways (Table IV-8). First, and most important, it documents the strength and pace of the movement toward full implementation. More than half of those districts that reported full-implementation in SY 1998/99 were no more than three-quarters implemented the year before. Between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99, 50% to 90% of the districts in each status category below fully-implemented in the first year had moved up at least one step by the second year.

The second revelation suggested by the matrix in Table IV-8 is that full implementation can be an illusive goal. This is demonstrated by the fact that more than 10% of all districts indicated that they were at a lower level of implementation in SY 1998/99 than they had reported the year before. While there can be several possible reasons for this, it is likely that the "learning curve" might extend further than it first appeared. This might also result from districts shifting among menu planning systems.

Table IV-7: Share of Public NSLP School Districts by Implementation Status for Chosen Menu Planning Method by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	Have not started		At least one-quarter Implemented		At least half implemented		At least three-quarters implemented		Fully implemented		All districts	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)										(number)	
All districts	6.7	3.2	12.3	5.7	19.9	13.1	26.3	22.7	34.8	55.4	13,503	13,114
District size[1]												
Less than 1,000	8.5	4.2	13.4	5.3	19.2	14.9	25.0	22.5	33.9	53.1	5,820	5,521
1,000 – 4,999	6.4	2.9	12.0	6.1	20.5	13.0	27.2	22.6	33.8	55.4	5,623	5,636
5,000 – 24,999	2.9	1.1	10.0	5.3	20.9	8.7	28.1	24.3	38.1	60.6	1,819	1,635
25,000 or more	0.8	0.9	7.1	4.8	14.6	5.6	24.6	24.7	52.9	64.1	240	231
Program participation												
NSLP and SBP	6.4	3.5	13.0	5.5	19.9	13.0	25.6	22.0	35.2	56.0	10,107	9,370
NSLP only	7.8	2.8	10.1	6.4	20.0	13.7	28.6	27.2	33.5	50.0	3,396	3,138
District poverty level[2]												
High (>60% f&r)	4.0	2.8	15.1	4.7	15.7	11.2	26.7	23.4	38.5	57.9	2,099	2,258
Medium (31-60% f&r)	6.0	3.4	13.2	5.2	20.7	13.2	26.2	24.9	33.9	53.2	5,252	4,825
Low (≤30% f&r)	8.3	3.2	10.5	6.4	20.7	13.8	26.3	20.8	34.2	55.7	6,152	5,940
Menu planning method chosen												
NSMP	2.8	2.8	14.6	4.3	19.5	16.6	34.4	27.3	28.8	48.9	2,679	2,640
ANSMP	0.0	1.4	5.5	8.8	28.2	25.7	28.9	22.7	37.2	41.4	454	444
Enhanced food-based	3.2	1.8	10.0	4.6	22.7	10.8	29.1	27.5	35.0	55.2	3,580	3,742
Traditional food-based	10.3	3.8	12.8	8.1	19.2	11.9	23.5	17.9	34.3	58.3	7,409	6,674
Other	2.5	7.3	10.4	0.0	6.7	17.2	21.5	22.7	59.5	52.8	163	233

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[1] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table IV-8: Share of Public NSLP School Districts by Implementation Status Reported in SY 1997/98 and SY 1998/99

Status reported in SY 1997/98	Status reported in SY 1998/99				
	Have not started	At least one-quarter implemented	At least half implemented	At least three-quarter Implemented	Fully implemented
	percent of all districts [1/]				
Have not started	0.6	1.0	1.0	1.2	3.2
At least one-quarter implemented	0.3	2.2	3.5	2.0	4.2
At least half implemented	0.6	0.9	4.0	7.5	7.9
At least three-quarter implemented	0.7	1.0	3.0	7.5	14.2
Fully implemented	0.8	0.8	1.4	5.4	25.1
Total	3.1	5.9	12.8	23.7	54.6

[1/] Represents the 13,106 districts in the sample in both years.
Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Future Intentions of Districts Using Food-Based Systems

Since the food-based menu planning systems closely resemble the approach that most schools used prior to the SMI, they are less demanding and more familiar to most school food directors. As a result, it is possible that some school districts have chosen to stay with a food-based system for the time being, but intend to eventually adopt NSMP once the wrinkles have been ironed out and once they and their staff are better prepared for the change.

Much of the documentation that is required for NSMP is also required of the districts using a food-based system. Thus, once food-based districts have developed the documentation that is required for their nutritional assessments (e.g. maintaining production records, developing and using standardized recipes, determining the nutritional content of commercially processed foods, etc.), they are a good way toward satisfying the conditions of NSMP.

To better gauge their intentions in this regard, those school food service directors that were using either of the two food-based systems or a menu planning system characterized as "other" were asked if they were currently:

- working toward implementation of NSMP
- planning to work toward implementation of NSMP
- not planning to work toward implementation of NSMP

Respondents were asked to indicate their intentions separately for elementary schools and middle/secondary schools since it is possible that NSMP might be implemented for one and not the other.

When data were collected for SY 1997/98, about half the districts using food-based systems indicated they were either working toward or planning to work toward implementation of NSMP (Tables IV-9 and IV-10). When asked about their intentions again in SY 1998/99, a somewhat smaller share of these school districts indicated they were working toward implementation of NSMP or were planning to. Responses indicate that about 60.0% of the districts that were using a food-based (or "other") menu planning system in SY 1998/99 planned to stay with that system while less than 40.0% were either working toward the adoption of NSMP or were planning to work toward its adoption. It is important to keep in mind though, that over one-third of all food-based districts still have plans to work toward or are in the process of implementing NSMP. Data collected for SY 1999/2000 will show if these districts continue with their plans for implementation of NSMP or if they instead decide to stay with the food-based systems already in place.

Table IV-9: Intentions of Public NSLP School Districts Using Food-Based Menu Planning Systems to Work toward Implementation of Nutrient Standard Menu Planning for Elementary Schools by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	Working toward implementation		Planning to work toward implementation		Not planning to work toward implementation		Total number of districts	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	---------------------------(percent)---------------------------						----(number)----	
All districts	26.6	22.3	24.7	16.8	48.7	60.9	10,728	10,565
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	23.9	22.8	23.3	14.8	52.8	62.5	4,647	4,561
1,000 – 4,999	28.5	22.2	26.0	18.8	45.5	59.0	4,518	4,433
5,000 – 24,999	29.7	21.4	25.6	17.7	44.5	61.0	1,392	1,309
25,000 or more	25.6	22.5	19.2	10.1	55.2	67.5	172	169
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	26.9	22.3	24.8	17.5	48.3	60.3	7,969	7,540
NSLP only	25.8	24.5	24.4	15.6	49.8	59.8	2,759	2,535
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	22.0	20.4	24.9	16.3	53.1	63.3	1,668	1,884
Medium (31-60% f&r)	26.3	23.6	23.8	14.8	49.9	61.5	4,132	3,789
Low (≤30% f&r)	28.4	22.1	25.3	18.5	46.3	59.4	4,928	4,800

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Slightly more districts were working toward implementation of NSMP for elementary schools than for middle/secondary schools. Given the greater ease with which NSMP can be applied to the lower grades given the simpler menus and less frequent use of a la carte, this is not surprising.

The reported intentions of these districts with regard to their future use of NSMP are substantially the same across district size, poverty, and program participation categories.

Table IV-10: Intentions of Public NSLP School Districts Using Food-Based Menu Planning Systems to Work toward Implementation of Nutrient Standard Menu Planning for Middle/Secondary Schools by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	Working toward implementation		Planning to work toward implementation		Not planning to work toward implementation		Total number of districts	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	----------------------------(percent)----------------------------						----(number)----	
All districts	23.9	19.3	24.2	17.5	51.9	63.1	9,603	9515
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	21.4	18.8	23.2	15.0	55.4	66.2	3,464	3474
1,000 – 4,999	25.6	20.7	25.1	19.6	49.2	59.8	4,585	4469
5,000 – 24,999	25.6	17.7	24.7	17.4	49.6	64.9	1,382	1320
25,000 or more	15.7	17.2	16.3	12.4	68.6	71.0	172	169
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	24.4	20.0	24.4	18.0	51.2	62.1	7,281	6993
NSLP only	22.4	19.1	23.6	16.3	54.0	64.6	2,322	2129
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	24.3	19.9	27.1	15.9	48.7	64.3	1,344	1449
Medium (31-60% f&r)	24.3	21.5	22.1	15.8	53.6	62.7	3,705	3548
Low (≤30% f&r)	23.5	17.7	25.1	19.3	51.4	62.9	4,554	4436

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

CHAPTER V:
OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES USED IN IMPLEMENTING THE SMI MENU PLANNING OPTIONS

Introduction

For many school districts, implementation of the SMI requires numerous changes in their food service operating procedures and for some the adoption of entirely new procedures. These changes are generally greatest for schools using NSMP or ANSMP, though some changes are required of all schools. Possible changes include: the assembly of documentation required for nutrient analysis, the use of computers for menu planning and nutrient analysis, modification of the grade and age categories used in menu planning, increased use of menu cycles and standardized recipes, and increased publicity of the nutrient content of meals served.

Information on these and related topics was collected as part of the first year survey conducted during SY 1997/98. The results of this survey are reported in the First Year Report.[1] In summary, the results were as follows:

- The documentation required to analyze the nutritional content of meals was generally available to school districts. At least two-thirds of all districts reported that for 11 of 17 specified items, the required documentation was routinely available.
- Despite the advantages of using menu cycles, only about 40% of all districts were using them. For those districts that use menu cycles, the 4-week cycle was most frequently used.
- Most districts (85%) reported that at least some of their recipes were standardized in SY 1997/98. However, only about one-fifth (22%) indicated that all their recipes were standardized.
- USDA's prescribed grade/age groupings were being used for purposes of menu planning by 30% of all schools while a wide variety of other groupings were used by the remaining 70%.
- A majority of all districts (78%) assigned weights in conducting nutritional analysis, with a slightly larger share of NSMP/ANSMP than food-based districts using weights (81% versus 75%).

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[1] *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000.

- Most districts (83%) reported that some re-analysis of their menus was necessary, most frequently for purposes of achieving their nutritional targets.
- In addition to the nutrient analysis required of NSMP/ANSMP districts, one-third of all food-based districts reported that they were conducting nutrient analysis. Of the food-based districts conducting nutrient analysis, 38% made their calculations without the aid of a computer.
- Of the 15-USDA approved software systems available at the time of the survey, 79% of those districts using computers for nutrient analysis reported using NUTRAKIDS by Lunch Byte Systems.
- Of the relatively small share of all districts using ANSMP (3.4%), just over half (52%) had submitted their menu and recipes to State agencies for approval. ANSMP districts receive their analytic support from a variety of sources including State Agencies (35%), food service management companies (18%), consultants (14%), and other school districts (14%).
- Nearly all districts using food-based menu planning systems (96%) reported taking a measures to improve the nutritional content of their menus.
- Most districts (83%) indicated that they do not publicize the nutrient content of their menus though a substantially larger share of those using NSMP/ANSMP as compared to those using food based systems do so (36% versus 12%).

Research Questions

With this as background, we turn to the research questions that were addressed through the survey conducted in SY 1998/99. Since several of the issues that were examined in the first year did not need to be repeated, a more abbreviated list of research questions relating to the operational procedures used in implementing the SMI is examined here. They are as follows:

- To what extent did school districts use menu cycles in SY 1998/99 and how has this changed from the previous school year? Are there differences in the use of menu cycles by district characteristics?
- How many NSMP/ANSMP school districts applied weights on the basis of actual or planned servings in conducting nutritional analysis in SY 1998/99 and how has this changed from the previous school year? Of these districts, how many exclude a la carte sales? Are there significant differences in the use of weights or the exclusion of a la carte sales among districts with differing characteristics?

- How many food-based menu planning school districts are conducting nutrient analysis and how did this change between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99?
- For the school districts using ANSMP in SY 1998/99, which organizations are conducting the analysis, to what extent have these districts submitted menus and recipes to their State agencies, and how many have State approval of their menus? How did this change between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99?
- With what frequency has it been necessary for school districts using NSMP/ANSMP to re-analyze their menus and why has this re-analysis been necessary? To what extent were there changes in the need for re-analysis between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99?
- For those school districts that are using a food-based approach to menu planning and do not conduct nutrient analysis, what steps are being taken to achieve the nutritional aims of the SMI? Were there any changes between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99?
- To what extent have school districts publicized the nutrient content of their meals and what methods have been used? Were there any changes between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99?

Use of Menu Cycles

Menu cycles are specified periods of time over which a standard set of menus is repeated. By establishing a set of menus that can be repeated on a set schedule, say every 4 or 5 weeks, it becomes possible to standardize major elements of the process. By using menu cycles, SFAs can more effectively plan their food and labor requirements. The requirements of the SMI have added another incentive for school districts to use menu cycles. In the absence of menu cycles, school food directors must maintain more elaborate records and NSMP/ANSMP schools must conduct nutritional analysis more frequently. Results of the NSMP Demonstration Evaluation indicated that 8 of the 11 districts that had not used cycle menus prior to NSMP, had adopted them by the end of the demonstration to reduce the burden of nutrient analysis.[1]

Results of the survey conducted in SY 1998/99, indicated that the share of all districts using menu cycles rose to just over half (50.1%) from 40% the year before. This is a relatively sizable increase to have occurred over such a brief period, suggesting that the incentive created by the SMI was at least partially responsible.

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[1] Mary Kay Fox, et.al. *Evaluation of the Nutritional Standard Menu Planning Demonstration: Final Report, Abt Associates*, Inc. August 1998

The increased use of menu cycles is evident across all sizes and types of districts. The greatest changes occurred among school districts using NSMP, ANSMP, and traditional food-based menu planning as well as among districts of intermediate size (1,000-24,999) and in the mid-poverty range (31-60% free and reduced eligible). Menu cycles are used most frequently among the largest districts (25,000 or more); in SY 1998/99, 77.6% of these districts reported their use.

Table V-1: Use of Menu Cycles by Public NSLP School Districts by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District Characteristics	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)	(percent)
All districts	40.0	50.1
District size[1]		
Less than 1,000	38.8	46.9
1,000 – 4,999	35.2	47.9
5,000 – 24,999	54.4	66.1
25,000 or more	73.3	77.6
Program participation		
NSLP and SBP	42.3	52.4
NSLP only	33.2	43.7
District poverty level[2]		
High (>60% f&r)	50.5	56.2
Medium (31-60% f&r)	41.9	56.3
Low (≤30% f&r)	34.9	43.1
Menu planning system		
NSMP	43.5	60.6
ANSMP	58.9	70.5
Enhanced	39.1	41.8
Traditional	32.3	48.6
Other	55.9	57.1

[1] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Use of Weighting

To ensure that the individual item components of a menu are appropriately credited in conducting nutritional analysis, it is necessary to determine the relative importance of each component in terms of actual or planned servings. This is done by assigning weights reflecting each item's relative importance. If there are twice as many servings of french fried potatoes as of green beans, for example, french fries should be assigned twice as much weight as green beans in calculating the nutritional content of the menu. Also, for any menu item in a reimbursable meal that is also offered for sale a la carte, the portion that is sold a la carte must be excluded from the calculation of these weights since it is the reimbursable meals that are being analyzed.

The initial SMI regulations required NSMP and ANSMP schools to assign weights in conducting nutritional analyses. Due to the burdensomeness of obtaining the menu production information required to assign weights, the USDA authorized the State child nutrition agencies to grant temporary waivers of this requirement. This was followed by a Congressional requirement in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998 that prohibited the USDA from requiring the use of weighted analysis through FY2003.

Despite the absence of a requirement that weighted analysis be used, 81% of all districts that use NSMP or ANSMP use weights in conducting nutrient analysis. Essentially the same share of districts reported using weights in both survey years. There are no pronounced differences in share among districts with different characteristics.

A slightly smaller share of all NSMP/ANSMP districts reported that they excluded a la carte sales in conducting nutrient analysis in the second year than in the first. In SY 1998/99, 67.6% of all these districts excluded a la carte sales, down slightly from 73.9% in SY 1997/98. This is despite the requirement that a la carte be removed and that only reimbursable meals be analyzed. The decline in share between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99 was greatest for the smallest districts and for those that participate only in the NSLP.

Table V-2: Share of Public NSLP School Districts Using NSMP/ANSMP Planning Systems that Weight Foods on the Basis of their Relative Importance and that Exclude A La Carte Sales, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	School districts that weight foods on basis of relative importance			
	1997/98		1998/99	
	Percent of total	School districts that exclude a la carte sales	Percent of total	School districts that exclude a la carte sales
		(percent)		(percent)
All districts	80.8	73.9	81.2	67.6
District size[1]				
Less than 1,000	77.2	69.8	79.5	56.2
1,000 – 4,999	85.3	73.8	83.9	71.5
5,000 – 24,999	79.5	83.5	77.6	79.6
25,000 or more	81.8	82.5	72.2	73.8
Program participation				
NSLP and SBP	82.5	74.2	81.5	70.1
NSLP only	75.3	72.7	81.0	55.2
District poverty level[2]				
High (>60% f&r)	71.1	73.1	71.9	66.4
Medium (31-60% f&r)	82.2	72.9	80.0	64.8
Low (≤30% f&r)	83.2	75.2	85.7	70.1

[1] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Re-analysis Requirements

The nutrient content of a menu must be re-analyzed whenever the composition of the menu changes. This can occur for any one of several reasons. For example, changes in the availability and/or the cost of ingredients and in student food preferences can prompt menu changes. In the early phases of SMI implementation, it is anticipated that school districts might also be making menu changes in order to meet their nutritional objectives. Districts have been encouraged to move toward the achievement of these nutritional objectives incrementally, learning as they go. To the extent they follow this approach, periodic re-analysis of their menus would be necessary.

Most districts (81.7%) report that some re-analysis of their menus was required in SY 1998/99. This is marginally lower than the 83.4% reported the year before. The two reasons most frequently cited for re-analysis are: (1) to achieve overall nutritional targets (55.9%) and (2) to incrementally move toward nutritional targets (46.8%).

To the extent there are differences among districts, they are most pronounced among the largest districts and those with the highest level of poverty. Among the largest districts, an even higher share (91.9%) re-analyzed their menus in both years, most frequently to achieve their nutritional objectives. The lowest share requiring re-analysis were those in high poverty areas with 70%.

A majority (62.5%) of those districts that found it necessary to re-analyze their menus in SY 1998/99 did so on a monthly basis. Since menus are commonly prepared on this basis, this is the most convenient time to do it. An increasing share of the largest district appear to have shifted toward quarterly re-analysis. As districts gain more experience with NSMP and ANSMP and as they achieve implementation, it is expected that the frequency that re-analysis is required will decrease.

Table V-3: Need for Re-Analysis of Menus by Public NSLP School Districts Using NSMP/ANSMP, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	Re-analysis not required		Re-analysis required due to:									
			Ingredients/foods not available		Change in student preferences		Cost of ingredients/foods		Incremental move toward targets		To achieve overall targets	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	-(percent)-											
All districts	16.6	18.3	32.1	30.0	43.3	39.5	28.1	26.3	50.0	46.8	60.4	55.9
District size[1/]												
Less than 1,000	21.5	17.6	32.1	31.6	37.0	35.4	28.3	29.8	47.1	54.4	56.8	53.0
1,000 – 4,999	13.9	20.2	30.5	27.7	47.1	38.7	27.8	22.8	51.4	42.7	60.8	55.0
5,000 – 24,999	11.3	17.0	35.9	33.1	49.5	49.7	27.8	28.9	52.6	42.7	66.8	62.9
25,000 or more	6.5	8.9	31.2	37.8	51.9	62.2	28.6	32.2	63.6	51.1	76.6	62.2
												100.0
Program participation												
NSLP and SBP	17.6	20.0	31.7	30.9	43.7	41.8	28.6	26.5	50.3	45.4	60.2	55.2
NSLP only	13.3	15.0	33.3	28.7	42.0	33.0	26.5	24.6	49.3	55.9	61.1	53.8
District poverty level[2/]												
High (>60% f&r)	22.2	30.0	32.6	27.9	38.5	32.4	34.4	13.4	52.1	45.1	54.0	44.1
Medium (31-60% f&r)	16.4	17.1	35.0	28.9	42.3	41.3	24.4	29.7	49.6	49.3	66.1	61.2
Low (≤30% f&r)	14.6	15.7	28.8	32.4	46.2	40.8	29.4	28.1	49.8	45.6	56.9	54.2

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table V-4: Frequency with Which Re-Analysis of Menus Has Been Required for Public NSLP School Districts Using NSMP/ANSMP, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District Characteristics	Re-analysis not required		Re-analysis required:														Number of school districts	
			Weekly		Biweekly		Monthly		Quarterly		Semester		Semi-annually		Annually			
	97/98	98/99	97/98	98/99	97/98	98/99	97/98	98/99	97/98	98/99	97/98	98/99	97/98	98/99	97/98	98/99	97/98	97/98
	(percent)																(number)	
All districts	23.6	18.6	4.9	3.6	2.2	2.4	45.8	50.9	10.1	12.2	4.0	4.0	4.9	2.3	4.5	6.0	3,065	3,017
District size[2]																		
Less than 1,000	35.1	17.6	6.5	2.0	2.1	2.2	37.2	53.5	6.7	7.5	3.8	6.7	2.8	1.6	5.8	8.9	1,323	1,068
1,000 – 4,999	19.2	20.5	4.0	5.5	3.3	2.9	51.8	50.3	9.2	13.2	3.1	2.0	4.8	2.5	4.6	3.2	1,186	1,407
5,000 – 24,999	13.2	17.6	3.8	2.4	0.4	1.9	49.4	46.0	18.2	18.6	5.6	3.1	7.2	2.4	2.0	8.0	479	429
25,000 or more	6.7	9.1	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.3	42.0	12.9	26.1	7.7	5.7	15.2	10.2	3.5	6.8	77	90
Program participation																		
NSLP and SBP	23.8	20.3	4.8	3.4	2.3	2.1	43.2	48.4	11.3	11.7	4.3	4.8	6.0	2.6	4.2	6.7	2,374	2,284
NSLP only	22.8	15.1	5.1	4.6	1.8	0.0	56.7	56.2	4.7	16.6	2.7	1.3	0.0	2.0	6.1	4.1	691	606
District poverty level[3]																		
High (>60% f&r)	33.2	31.0	1.1	2.9	3.0	0.9	48.0	39.3	5.4	15.4	3.7	7.8	2.2	1.3	3.4	1.3	491	463
Medium (31-60% f&r)	23.0	17.3	8.0	3.1	2.7	3.5	41.5	53.3	11.4	8.1	3.5	4.3	5.8	1.1	4.2	9.3	1,321	1,294
Low (≤30% f&r)	20.7	15.7	3.0	4.4	1.3	1.9	49.5	51.7	10.5	15.5	4.7	2.3	5.0	4.1	5.3	4.5	1,254	1,237

[1] Percentages do not add to 100% due to exclusion of non-responses.

[2] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[3] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Steps Taken by Food-Based Menu Planning Districts to Achieve Nutritional Objectives

School districts that use a food-based menu planning system are not required to conduct nutritional analysis, though they are encouraged to do so. In the absence of nutritional analysis, it is not possible to verify whether the meals being served are meeting the Dietary Guidelines, as required by the SMI.

The surveys conducted for this study reveal that a significant portion of the districts that are following a food-based menu planning approach are conducting nutrient analysis through some means. In SY 1998/99, 36.9% of these districts indicated that they were doing nutritional analysis, up slightly from 33.1% a year earlier. The share of these districts that do nutritional analysis rises as the size of district increases. The share of very large school districts (25,000 or more) using a food-based system that conducted nutrient analysis was nearly double the average of all districts (59.4% versus 36.9%) in SY 1998/99. The reason for the decline in share (from 73.3% to 59.4%) between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99 within this size class is not clear, though a change in the composition of districts of this size that responded to the survey is thought to be partially responsible. It is noted that 9% of the very large districts switched at least partially to NSMP between SY 1997/98 and SY 1998/99. Some of these could have been SFAs that were formerly conducting nutrient analysis while using a food-based system.

For those food-based districts that are not conducting nutrient analysis – just under two-thirds of the total number of food-based districts – the question remains as to what steps they are taking to ensure that the meals they serve are meeting the Dietary Guidelines. For districts using the enhanced food-based system, this is of somewhat less concern in that the prescribed meal patterns have been designed around achievement of the Dietary Guidelines. School districts using the traditional food-based system, on the other hand, must devise their own modifications in order to satisfy this nutritional objective.

Table V-5: Food-based Menu Planning School Districts that are Conducting Nutrient Analysis, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	Number of districts		Share of all food-based districts		Share of all districts	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	---(number)---		---------------------(percent)---------------------			
All districts	3,615	3,947	33.1	36.9	26.8	30.1
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	1,278	1,482	27.2	32.4	22.0	26.8
1,000 – 4,999	1,663	1,730	35.9	38.3	29.6	30.7
5,000 – 24,999	548	604	38.7	45.5	30.1	36.9
25,000 or more	126	101	73.3	59.4	52.5	43.5
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	2,793	2,958	34.6	38.9	27.6	31.6
NSLP only	822	804	28.9	31.0	24.2	25.6
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	521	718	31.2	38.0	24.8	31.8
Medium (31-60% f&r)	1,418	1,323	34.1	34.8	27.0	27.4
Low (≤30% f&r)	1,676	1,875	32.9	38.2	27.2	31.6
Menu planning system[3/]						
Enhanced food-based	1,041	1,255	29.1	33.5	7.7	9.6
Traditional food-based	2,560	2,392	34.6	35.8	19.0	18.2
Other	80	96	52.3	44.4	0.6	0.7

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

[3/] Some school districts use more than one menu planning system.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

In response to being asked what steps they have taken to achieve the Dietary Guidelines, a large majority (94%) report having made changes in the composition of the foods they serve or in how foods are prepared. Of three possible changes identified in the survey (see Table V-6), more than 60% of the responding districts indicated that they had made all three changes. A comparison of the responses in SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99 indicates that the incidence of these actions has probably diminished slightly, as these districts "settle-in" with their new menu planning systems. There are no large differences among districts of different size, program mix, or poverty level.

Table V-6: Steps Taken by Public NSLP School Districts Using Food-Based Menu Planning Systems that do not Conduct Nutritional Analysis to Achieve Dietary Guidelines, by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District Characteristics	Offer additional servings of more nutritious foods		Substitute more nutritious foods and ingredients		Use more nutritious preparation techniques		No changes made		Total number of school districts	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	--------------------------------------(percent)--------------------------------								----(number)----	
All districts	77.3	70.0	77.0	62.3	81.1	63.5	6.4	6.1	6,891	6,738
District size[1]										
Less than 1,000	73.6	67.6	76.7	55.8	80.3	55.3	7.1	8.7	3,221	3,098
1,000 – 4,999	79.5	71.5	76.4	68.1	81.1	69.7	6.0	4.3	2,803	2,785
5,000 – 24,999	83.1	74.3	79.8	66.9	84.4	73.2	4.8	3.3	826	724
25,000 or more	90.6	68.6	93.0	67.1	80.8	81.4	4.9	1.4	41	70
Program participation										
NSLP and SBP	79.4	68.9	76.1	60.6	81.8	63.0	5.9	6.8	4,963	4,643
NSLP only	71.7	73.6	79.6	68.9	79.2	66.3	7.5	3.1	1,928	1,789
District poverty level[2]										
High (>60% f&r)	81.1	68.6	73.9	50.2	80.6	53.9	6.6	12.5	1,060.	1,172
Medium (31-60% f&r)	76.6	67.9	82.5	59.8	85.9	64.1	3.6	6.5	2,578	2,475
Low (≤30% f&r)	76.5	72.2	73.7	68.9	77.4	66.7	8.5	3.5	3,253	3,030

[1] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Status of ANSMP School Districts

Of the four principal menu planning options, Assisted Nutrient Menu Planning (ANSMP) remains the least used with only 3.4% of all districts using it. While we speculated in the First Year Report that this approach might become more popular as more State agencies provided support, this has not happened. As discussed more fully in Chapter VIII, fewer State agencies were assisting with this approach in SY 1998/99 than the year before (12 SAs SY 1998/99 versus 15 SAs in SY 1997/98).

For the districts that are using ANSMP, State agencies are the principal source of support, providing analysis to nearly half (46.4%) of the total number. This represents an increase of about one-third in State agency share from that measured a year earlier. Of the school districts using ANSMP, 60.6% had submitted menus and recipes to their State agencies. This is up from the 52.3% reported the year before, but it is still low given that the program was in its third year of implementation at the time of the survey. All of those districts that had submitted their menus and recipes to State agencies reported that they had been approved.

Given the relatively small number of school districts in the sample that reported using ANSMP (49), care should be exercised in interpreting results disaggregated by district characteristics.

Table V-7: Status of Public NSLP School Districts Using Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning, SY 1998/99

	Districts using ANSMP									
		Analysis conducted by:					Districts that have submitted menus and recipes to State agency			
									Districts with approved menus	
District characteristics	Number	State agency	Another school district	Consultant	Food service mgt. company	Other	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total
	(number)	---------------------------(percent)---------------------------					(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
All districts	561	46.4	12.0	14.4	14.9	12.3	340	60.6	340	100.0
District size[1/]										
Less than 1,000	274	41.2	18.6	14.9	6.3	19.0	152	55.5	152	100.0
1,000 – 4,999	210	52.4	5.9	12.4	27.1	2.4	138	65.7	138	100.0
5,000 – 24,999	51	60.9	0.0	21.7	8.7	8.7	26	51.0	26	100.0
25,000 or more	4	0.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	50.0	2	50.0	2	100.0
Program participation										
NSLP and SBP	418	48.5	5.5	18.2	12.4	15.5	265	63.4	265	100.0
NSLP only	110	40.7	39.5	0.0	19.8	0.0	43	39.1	43	100.0
District poverty level[2/]										
High (>60% f&r)	87	9.5	21.4	38.1	10.7	20.2	52	59.8	52	100.0
Medium (31-60% f&r)	239	79.2	0.0	4.0	9.2	7.5	149	62.3	149	100.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	212	30.8	20.1	13.2	23.3	12.6	117	55.2	117	100.0

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Publicizing the Nutrient Content of Menus

School food authorities have been encouraged to involve students and their parents in the changes that are being made as part of the SMI. Nutrition education is a key component of the initiative. The very first principle of Team Nutrition, the educational component of the SMI, is that "children should be empowered to make food choices that reflect the Dietary Guidelines for Americans."[1] One means of better preparing children and their parents to make these choices is for schools to publicize the nutrient content of the foods they serve.

School food districts taking part in the study were asked if they publicized the nutrient content of their menus and, if so, through what means. A large majority (78.6%) reported that they do not publicize the nutrient content of their meals. This is only marginally smaller than last year's 82.5%. As we found last year, a substantially larger share of the NSMP/ANSMP districts (32.7%) publicize nutrient content as compared to those that are using food-based systems (18.6%). However, it is noted that the difference between the two types of planning systems has narrowed as the share of food-based systems publicizing nutrient content has increased by half while the share of NSMP/ANSMP districts has declined somewhat. In general, school districts that use computerized systems of nutrient analysis (regardless of which menu planning system they are applying) can more readily generate information on the nutrient content of their menus.

For those districts that publicize the nutrient content of their menus, a variety of techniques are used. Across all districts, this includes: verbal notification (37.6%), informational postings (36.1%), labels in the cafeteria (27.7%), and handouts (27.6%). The NSMP/ANSMP districts are somewhat more dependent on the use of informational postings and handouts and less dependent on the other methods than are the food-based districts. In comparison with the previous school year, it would appear that in SY 1998/99 fewer districts were using multiple methods of publicizing the nutrient content of their menus. This could be due to the progress districts are making in sorting-out which of these methods are most effective.

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[1] USDA, FCS, *Healthy School Meals Training*, Boston Training Session, February 13-15, 1996, p. 10-2.

Table V-8: Share of Public NSLP School Districts that Publicize the Nutrient Content of Meals Served by the Methods Used and Type of Menu Planning System, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Extent/method	Districts using food-based menu planning systems		Districts using NSMP/ANSMP		All districts[1]	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	--------------(percent)------------------				----(percent)----	
Publicize nutrient content:						
Yes	12.4	18.5	36.3	32.7	17.5	21.4
No	87.6	81.5	63.7	67.3	82.5	78.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of districts	10,926	10,679	3,065	2,895	13,639	12,898
Methods used: [2]						
Informational postings	43.2	33.7	59.9	43.1	52.4	36.1
Handouts	45.2	23.6	62.3	39.7	54.7	27.6
Labels in cafeteria	38.3	31.5	26.3	20.7	34.0	27.7
T.V.	5.0	2.5	2.4	0.6	3.9	2.0
Computer	5.0	3.8	5.3	3.0	5.3	3.7
Verbally	36.0	41.4	35.0	27.1	36.8	37.6
Other	22.6	18.2	25.9	37.2	24.9	24.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of districts	1,351	1,979	1,114	946	2,386	2,755

[1] Since some school districts report using both food-based and nutrient standard menu planning techniques, there is some duplication in the "all districts" column.

[2] Percentages based on the number of school districts having at least some schools that publicize the nutrient content of their meals.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report,* October 2000; *Second Year Report,* 2001.

CHAPTER VI: IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE

Introduction

In this chapter, we take measure of the impact of the SMI on school food operations, as reported in SY 1998/99. For the most part, we revisit topics that we examined in the First Year Report on the basis of survey responses collected during the previous school year, SY 1997/98. By comparing responses for two consecutive years, we look for evidence that the operating measures required under the SMI are becoming an established part of school food operations and that the several changes made necessary by the SMI have been successfully accommodated.

The chapter is divided into two major sections. The first section examines the impact of the SMI on only those school districts that are using a nutrient-based menu planning system, i.e. NSMP or ANSMP. The second section assesses the impact of the SMI on all school districts, regardless of the menu planning system in use.

Research Questions

As in the First Year Report, the performance of a wide range of relatively detailed operational tasks is examined. In summary, the research questions addressed are as follows:

- How do school districts using NSMP or ANSMP view the level of burden associated with specific implementation tasks? Were there changes in the perceived level of burden between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99?
- To what extent have menu changes been required by school districts that are implementing NSMP or ANSMP? Have there been changes in the amount of time spent on menu planning? Have there been changes in a la carte food sales? How do the changes measured in SY 1997/98 compare to those for SY 1998/99?
- To what extent have there been changes in specified menu-related features of all district programs? To what extent have there been changes in specified food preparation and procurement practices?
- To what extent do food service directors believe that there have been changes in food waste, program acceptance, number of food choices, portion size, and the number of a la carte items offered in SY 1998/99 compared to the previous school year? How do these changes compare to those reported in SY 1997/98?

- To what extent have school districts experienced difficulty in performing specific tasks associated with implementation of the SMI? How did this change between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99?
- What is the overall attitude of major stakeholders in the school food program toward the SMI? What is the overall attitude of school food directors toward the SMI? Have these attitudes changed between SY 1997/98 and SY 1998/99?

Impact of NSMP/ANSMP

Ease of Implementing NSMP

As in the first year survey, school food directors using NSMP and ANSMP were asked whether they considered the performance of 14 specified tasks associated with implementation of these menu planning systems a "significant burden," a "minor burden," or "not a burden." For most of the tasks (10 of 14), a majority or near-majority of all NSMP/ANSMP districts described them as a "minor burden." The remaining districts were approximately evenly divided among those who considered them a "major burden" and those who considered them "no burden.

Taken as a whole, the results suggest that school food directors viewed the overall array of tasks as slightly less burdensome in SY 1998/99 than they had the year before, though not consistently so across all tasks. Those tasks viewed as a "major burden" with greatest frequency were the same in both years. The most burdensome tasks (and percent of districts describing them as a "major burden") are as follows:

- entering and analyzing recipes (54.4%)
- entering and analyzing menus (52.8%)
- obtaining missing nutrient information (51.6%)
- obtaining information for weighted analysis (46.7%)

It is noteworthy that all four of these tasks are critical to the effective application of NSMP and ANSMP. Though a majority or near-majority of the respondents continue to see each of these tasks as a "major burden," the share for each task was somewhat lower in the more recent year. While the reduction in burden was evident across all district sizes, for certain of the tasks (e.g. entering and analyzing recipes) it was especially evident among the largest districts.

For many of the tasks that are viewed by a majority of the districts as a "minor burden," there is some indication that these tasks are seen as becoming a greater burden, at least by some districts. For example, while only 19.8% of all districts saw training food staff as a "major burden" in SY 1997/98, a year later the share had risen to 27.7%. For districts of 25,000 students or more, the share of districts that considered training a "major burden" rose from 28.6% to 38.9% over this period. To some extent, these changes probably result from some districts becoming more directly involved in the "nuts and bolts" of SMI. In this sense, the responses in SY 1998/99 could be viewed as a more reliable measure of the level of difficulty encountered by districts that are in the throes of implementation.

A comparison of how districts at different stages of implementing NSMP or ANSMP view the burdensomeness of these tasks appears in Table VI-3.

A somewhat higher share of those districts in the earlier stages if implementation (50% or less) reports that the required tasks are a "major burden." For example, the mean percentage for districts indicating that they were "at least 25% implemented" in SY 1998/99 reveal no consistent pattern of change between years.

Table VI-1: Extent to Which Tasks Required in Implementing Nutrient Standard Menu Planning Have Been a Burden to Participating Public NSLP School Districts, by Size of District, SY 1998/99

Task	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 – 4,999			5,000 – 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Major burden	Minor burden	No burden	Major burden	Minor burden	No burden	Major burden	Minor burden	No burden	Major burden	Minor burden	No burden	Major burden	Minor burden	No burden
	(percent)														
Developing standardized recipes	24.0	60.4	15.6	23.0	57.8	19.1	32.2	51.8	16.0	24.4	41.1	34.4	24.9	57.4	17.8
Entering/analyzing recipes	56.2	34.1	9.6	52.5	36.6	11.0	58.5	33.3	8.2	44.4	38.9	16.7	54.4	35.4	10.2
Planning menus	21.9	55.3	22.8	16.6	62.9	20.5	28.7	57.9	13.4	14.4	61.1	24.4	20.3	59.4	20.3
Obtaining information for weighted analysis	51.0	34.1	15.0	42.2	35.6	22.2	49.1	39.9	11.0	43.8	37.1	19.1	46.7	35.5	17.8
Entering/analyzing menus	55.2	33.0	11.8	48.8	33.0	18.3	61.2	28.5	10.4	34.8	47.2	18.0	52.8	32.5	14.7
Obtaining missing nutrient information	59.0	28.0	13.0	45.8	44.6	9.5	56.4	37.8	5.8	44.0	42.9	13.2	51.6	38.1	10.2
Providing specifications for purchased foods	31.6	47.1	21.3	20.8	56.6	22.6	28.0	52.9	19.1	21.1	55.6	23.3	25.8	52.7	21.5
Monitoring to ensure that specifications are met	26.1	52.7	21.2	22.6	51.8	25.6	23.5	57.6	18.9	15.4	54.9	29.7	23.6	53.3	23.0
Training food service staff	25.0	48.8	26.2	26.9	55.7	17.3	33.6	55.1	11.3	38.9	50.0	11.1	27.7	53.0	19.4
Entering product information	34.6	49.1	16.4	33.3	46.9	19.8	43.8	40.3	15.9	30.0	47.8	22.2	35.7	46.4	17.9
Selecting appropriate items from database	22.3	62.9	14.8	17.3	56.0	26.7	22.4	56.2	21.4	15.6	45.6	38.9	20.0	58.2	21.9
Retraining staff to identify reimbursable meals	16.3	47.0	36.7	14.1	55.5	30.4	18.1	54.8	27.1	23.6	56.2	20.2	15.6	52.7	31.6
Persuading students to select reimbursable meals	16.0	60.8	23.2	21.0	56.6	22.4	19.8	59.5	20.7	15.7	60.7	23.6	18.7	58.9	22.3
Marketing healthier food choices	12.3	64.6	23.0	14.2	59.1	26.7	20.5	55.5	24.0	15.7	59.6	24.7	14.4	60.9	24.8

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

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Table VI-2: Extent to Which Tasks Required in Implementing Nutrient Standard Menu Planning Have Been a Major Burden to Participating Public NSLP School Districts, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Task	District Size								All districts	
	Less than 1,000		1,000-4,999		5,000-24,999		25,000 or more			
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
Developing standardized recipes	32.4	24.0	21.7	23.0	21.3	32.2	39.0	24.4	26.7	24.9
Entering/analyzing recipes	69.8	56.2	60.6	52.5	59.5	58.5	62.3	44.4	64.5	54.4
Planning menus	30.6	21.9	23.6	16.6	26.9	28.7	20.5	14.4	27.1	20.3
Obtaining information for weighted analysis	60.7	51.0	39.9	42.2	47.5	49.1	53.2	43.8	50.4	46.7
Entering/analyzing menus	60.6	55.2	59.0	48.8	60.5	61.2	43.6	34.8	59.6	52.8
Obtaining missing nutrient information	68.2	59.0	61.2	45.8	59.2	56.4	33.8	44.0	63.2	51.6
Providing specifications for purchased foods	30.5	31.6	19.7	20.8	18.2	28.0	14.5	21.1	24.0	25.8
Monitoring to ensure that specifications are met	14.2	26.1	15.8	22.6	18.2	23.5	13.0	15.4	15.4	23.6
Training food service staff	16.3	25.0	21.2	26.9	24.6	33.6	28.6	38.9	19.8	27.7
Entering product information	21.5	34.6	32.0	33.3	33.4	43.8	35.9	30.0	27.8	35.7
Selecting appropriate items from database	8.9	22.3	14.0	17.3	11.3	22.4	10.3	15.6	11.3	20.0
Retraining staff to identify reimbursable meals	9.5	16.3	13.2	14.1	16.3	18.1	27.3	23.6	12.4	15.6
Persuading students to select reimbursable meals	13.0	16.0	19.3	21.0	16.7	19.8	14.1	15.7	16.1	18.7
Marketing healthier food choices	13.6	12.3	12.0	14.2	19.4	20.5	17.9	15.7	14.0	14.4
Total number of districts	(number) 1,323	(number) 1,068	(number) 1,186	(number) 1,400	(number) 479	(number) 425	(number) 77	(number) 89	(number) 3,065	(number) 3,006

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

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Table VI-3: Extent to Which Tasks Required in Implementing Nutrient Standard Menu Planning have been a Major Burden to Participating Public NSLP School Districts, by Status of Implementation, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Task	Status of Implementation										All Districts	
	Fully implemented		At least 75% implemented		At least 50% implemented		At least 25% implemented		Not started			
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)										(percent)	
Developing standardized recipes	17.8	22.5	30.8	21.2	26.6	37.4	39.5	32.7	14.2	14.4	26.7	24.9
Entering/analyzing recipes	56.6	48.7	59.2	51.4	69.7	70.8	83.9	79.2	84.0	49.3	64.4	54.4
Planning menus	25.9	19.8	24.3	20.2	25.5	20.6	42.0	34.1	12.3	4.3	27.1	20.3
Obtaining information for weighted analysis	45.6	43.3	50.5	41.0	47.4	57.5	65.1	80.0	55.8	49.3	50.4	46.7
Entering/analyzing menus	52.4	47.5	54.2	49.3	62.8	64.8	79.2	96.6	87.9	39.2	59.6	52.8
Obtaining missing nutrient information	55.5	55.0	58.8	42.4	67.2	55.2	81.4	70.4	86.0	20.8	63.2	51.6
Providing specifications for purchased foods	17.2	27.2	20.7	18.8	30.1	29.7	40.1	42.5	16.2	14.4	24.0	25.8
Monitoring to ensure that specifications are met	12.5	21.8	14.2	21.4	14.0	31.3	27.9	34.1	12.3	13.2	15.4	23.6
Training food service staff	16.4	27.0	18.5	26.1	17.9	33.4	34.7	34.9	16.2	4.3	19.8	27.7
Entering product information	21.5	33.3	25.0	28.8	31.3	51.8	41.2	54.8	44.4	14.4	27.8	35.7
Selecting appropriate items from database	8.7	17.3	11.8	18.2	9.0	17.9	19.3	57.4	12.3	42.9	11.3	20.0
Retraining staff to identify reimbursable meals	10.6	13.8	11.4	18.5	13.4	16.1	17.0	11.6	16.2	28.5	12.4	15.6
Persuading students to select reimbursable meals	17.5	18.1	14.3	23.4	15.5	16.6	18.1	8.2	16.2	14.4	16.1	18.7
Marketing healthier food choices	10.9	11.7	14.6	18.4	17.0	14.3	15.1	21.4	12.3	13.2	14.0	14.3
	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)
Total number of districts	935	1,526	1,008	803	644	492	403	134	75	61	3,065	3,017

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Staff Time in Planning Menus

While menu planning during the start-up phase of NSMP and ANSMP could be time consuming, once the systems become fully operational it is assumed that they will be less demanding of staff time. A comparison of the survey findings for SY 1997/98 and SY 1998/99 reveal that this is generally what is occurring. In SY 1997/98, 65.5% of all districts reported that more time was being spent in planning breakfast and 75.8% were spending more time planning lunch menus. And the same general pattern was evident among districts of all sizes, poverty levels, and mix of programs.

Only one year later, the share of districts spending more time on breakfasts has been cut nearly in half to 33.2% while the share spending more time planning lunch menus has fallen to 46.3%. Of course, to the extent most districts continue to spend the same amount of time on menu planning as they did during the start-up of NSMP/ANSMP, they are still devoting more time to the task than they did pre-SMI.

It is perhaps noteworthy that 12 to 13% of those districts in the larger size categories (5,000 students and above) reported spending less time planning both breakfast and lunch menus. Although this is not a large percentage point increase in share over the year before, it could be indicative of an emerging trend as districts gain more experience with the new menu planning systems and become more proficient in their use.

It does not appear that the status of menu planning implementation has much effect on the time spent in planning menus. Although the number of NSMP/ANSMP districts indicating that they have not started implementing their system yet is relatively small (3.9%), it is noteworthy that the proportion of these districts spending more time on planning lunch menus is nearly as great as for those districts that are partially or fully implemented.

There is some tendency for a larger share of those districts that are only part way through implementation to take more time in planning their lunch menus than those districts that have fully implemented systems. But beyond this, the relationship between implementation status and time spent in planning menus is weak.

Table VI-4: Change in Time Spent Planning Breakfast Menus in NSMP/ANSMP School Districts Compared to the Previous School Year, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	1997/98			1998/99		
	More time	Same	Less time	More time	Same	Less time
	------------(percent)------------			------------(percent)------------		
All districts	65.5	27.3	7.3	33.2	59.9	6.9
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	68.2	21.4	10.4	33.0	64.6	2.4
1,000 – 4,999	64.2	30.7	5.1	33.1	58.7	8.2
5,000 – 24,999	63.7	31.5	4.8	33.3	54.4	12.3
25,000 or more	56.6	34.2	9.2	27.9	59.3	12.8
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	65.5	27.3	7.3	35.9	56.0	8.0
NSLP only	--	--	--	--	--	--
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	65.5	25.9	8.6	29.1	67.0	3.8
Medium (31-60% f&r)	65.8	27.1	7.1	35.5	55.9	8.6
Low (≤30% f&r)	64.9	28.3	6.8	31.4	62.3	6.3
Status of implementation						
Have not started	100.0	0.0	0.0	15.7	68.6	15.7
At least one-quarter implemented	79.2	12.2	8.7	44.4	54.0	1.6
At least half implemented	59.6	35.0	5.3	34.8	64.1	1.2
At least three-quarters implemented	65.5	28.2	6.3	34.3	58.9	6.8
Fully implemented	61.2	29.4	9.4	31.7	59.3	9.0

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-5: Change in Time Spent Planning Lunch Menus in NSMP/ANSMP School Districts Compared to the Previous School Year, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	1997/98			1998/99		
	More time	Same	Less time	More time	Same	Less time
	-------------(percent)-------------			-------------(percent)-------------		
All districts	75.8	18.0	6.1	46.3	46.9	6.8
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	77.6	13.7	8.7	41.7	55.6	2.7
1,000 – 4,999	77.5	19.4	3.1	50.6	41.3	8.1
5,000 – 24,999	69.1	24.6	6.3	47.5	40.6	11.9
25,000 or more	64.1	26.9	9.0	29.5	56.8	13.6
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	74.2	19.4	6.4	45.6	46.5	7.9
NSLP only	81.5	13.5	5.0	50.7	45.3	4.0
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	73.0	19.1	7.9	38.3	55.7	6.1
Medium (31-60% f&r)	73.2	19.8	7.0	45.3	46.7	8.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	79.8	15.7	4.5	50.5	43.7	5.9
Status of implementation						
Have not started	100.0	0.0	0.0	45.6	40.5	14.0
At least one-quarter implemented	84.7	8.5	6.8	43.3	55.2	1.5
At least half implemented	80.5	15.7	3.7	59.3	39.6	1.0
At least three-quarters implemented	74.5	20.8	4.8	49.9	43.5	6.7
Fully implemented	69.3	21.6	9.1	40.5	50.5	9.0

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Menu Changes

In adopting NSMP or ANSMP, it was assumed that most schools would have to make some changes in their menus to achieve their nutritional objectives. In both the year one and year two surveys, school food directors were asked if their menus were "very different," "somewhat different," or if there was "no difference," compared to the year before.

Survey results for SY 1997/98 indicated that there had been some changes in menus but that they had not been extreme. Over 70% of all respondents reported that their breakfast menus were "somewhat different" and over 80% reported the same for their lunch menus. Responses one year later, for SY 1998/99, indicate that menus continue to change, but for a slightly smaller share of districts. Thus, while a majority of districts continue to report "somewhat different" menus, an increasing share indicates that their menus haven't changed. Over one-third of these districts reported "no difference" in their breakfast menus in SY 1998/99 and about one-quarter reported the same for their lunch menus.

Table VI-6: Menu Changes From the Previous School Year Made by Public NSLP School Districts using NSMP and ANSMP, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Menu/school type	1997/98				1998/99			
	Degree of difference in menus			Total	Degree of difference in menus			Total
	Very different	Somewhat different	No difference		Very different	Somewhat different	No difference	
	(percent)				(percent)			
Breakfast								
Elementary	3.8	73.0	23.1	100.0	1.6	62.0	36.3	100.0
Middle/secondary	3.9	73.2	22.8	100.0	2.8	63.2	34.0	100.0
Lunch								
Elementary	4.1	81.6	14.4	100.0	4.0	70.0	26.0	100.0
Middle/secondary	6.7	80.0	13.3	100.0	5.3	69.8	24.9	100.0
Other (deli, salad bars, etc.)								
Elementary	3.8	68.6	27.7	100.0	4.6	53.6	41.7	100.0
Middle/secondary	4.7	67.1	28.2	100.0	11.3	57.0	41.7	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Change in A La Carte Sales in Districts Using NSMP/ANSMP

Examining trends in a la carte sales is important for at least two interrelated reasons. First, to the extent changes in a la carte sales coincide with implementation of the SMI, they could be causally related. For example, student dissatisfaction with menu changes could result in increased a la carte sales. Trends in a la carte sales are also important as an indication of the overall strength of student demand for reimbursable meals. Since reimbursable meals are the vehicle for delivering a more nutritious diet to school children, an erosion in the demand for these meals undercuts the achievement of the SMI's principal objective.

Viewed across all NSMP/ANSMP school districts,[1/] 59.8% of all elementary schools and 83.7% of all middle/secondary schools offered a la carte food sales in SY 1998/99. In the aggregate, this is about the same as the year before. Comparison by size of district suggests two opposing trends. A somewhat reduced share of schools in districts of less than 1,000 students report offering a la carte sales. The sharpest decline occurred among middle/secondary schools in these districts, falling from 77.8% in SY 1997/98 to 63.5% in SY 1998/99. A trend in the opposite direction is indicated for elementary schools in the largest districts, those of 25,000 or more. The share of these schools that offered a la carte sales rose from 65.4% to 83.5%.

Among those NSMP/ANSMP elementary schools that offered a la carte sales, overall, 62.2% reported no change in a la carte sales in SY 1998/99. This is down somewhat from the year before when 83.7% reported no change. The share of elementary schools reporting increased a la carte sales (19.2%) substantially exceeded the share reporting reduced sales (3.5%) and was about double the share reporting increases the previous year. The share with increased sales was evident across districts of all sizes, program mix, and poverty level.

Among NSMP/ANSMP middle/secondary schools, the predominant trend appears to be one of increased sales. Of those districts offering a la carte, 56.3% reported increased sales. This compares with 35.3% that reported increased sales the year before. This trend is somewhat uniform throughout all of these districts though the highest percent reporting increased a la carte sales appears to be among the most affluent districts. Among these districts (92.2% of which offer a la carte sales in their middle/secondary schools) over two-thirds (67.9%) reported increased a la carte sales in SY 1998/99, a sharp increase from the 41.4% reported the year before.

In summary, these findings indicate that a la carte sales in districts with nutrient-based planning systems continue to grow and at what appears to be an accelerating pace.

[1/] Data on a la carte sales was not collected from districts using food-based menu planning systems.

Table VI-7: Change in A La Carte Sales From the Previous Year in NSMP/ANSMP Elementary Schools, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	1997/98				1998/99			
	Increased sales	No change	Decreased sales	A la carte not offered	Increased sales	No change	Decreased sales	A la carte not offered
	----------------(percent)----------------				----------------(percent)----------------			
All districts	9.6	51.0	0.3	39.1	19.2	37.2	3.5	40.2
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	5.9	42.2	0.0	51.9	10.8	28.4	1.5	59.3
1,000 – 4,999	10.8	57.3	0.7	31.3	23.5	39.1	4.6	32.8
5,000 – 24,999	17.7	59.4	0.0	22.8	24.7	45.8	4.0	25.4
25,000 or more	9.0	56.4	0.0	34.6	20.9	58.2	4.4	16.5
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	10.4	54.2	0.3	35.0	19.5	37.6	3.4	39.5
NSLP only	6.8	39.6	0.0	53.6	18.9	36.0	4.4	40.7
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	3.7	47.5	0.0	48.9	12.6	35.0	4.8	47.6
Medium (31-60% f&r)	6.7	53.7	0.6	39.0	14.7	40.4	1.7	43.2
Low (≤30% f&r)	15.3	49.6	0.0	35.1	26.7	34.5	4.8	34.0

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-8: Change in A La Carte Sales From the Previous Year in NSMP/ANSMP Middle/Secondary Schools, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	1997/98				1998/99			
	Increased sales	No change	Decreased sales	A la carte not offered	Increased sales	No change	Decreased sales	A la carte not offered
	----------------(percent)----------------				----------------(percent)----------------			
All districts	30.6	54.9	1.2	13.3	47.1	32.0	4.6	16.3
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	18.2	58.4	1.1	22.2	27.3	32.9	3.3	36.5
1,000 – 4,999	36.1	52.5	1.7	9.7	54.0	29.7	5.4	10.9
5,000 – 24,999	39.6	54.7	0.2	5.5	56.4	36.8	3.3	3.5
25,000 or more	49.4	49.4	1.3	0.0	48.9	42.2	8.9	0.0
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	28.5	57.7	1.2	12.7	45.9	33.5	4.3	16.3
NSLP only	40.1	42.6	1.4	15.9	49.8	28.4	6.8	15.0
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	18.0	53.0	0.0	29.0	32.5	35.9	2.3	29.3
Medium (31-60% f&r)	27.5	57.9	2.1	12.6	35.7	41.5	2.4	20.4
Low (≤30% f&r)	37.5	52.4	0.7	9.4	62.6	22.3	7.3	7.8

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Overall Impact of the School Meals Initiative

While the previous section was devoted only to those school districts that reported using NSMP or ANSMP in SY 1998/99, the section that follows examines the impact of the SMI on all school districts participating in the NSLP, regardless of their choice of menu planning system.

Menu Related Features of the Program

It was anticipated that school districts would make numerous menu-related changes in their programs as they implemented the SMI. This was confirmed by results of the first year survey. Findings from the first year also indicated that a significant share of all districts had still not taken some of the steps (e.g. the adoption of centralized menu planning and the use of menu cycles) that would probably have facilitated reaching the nutritional objectives of the SMI.

Changes in menu related features continued to move in a constructive direction in SY 1998/99. Of particular note, the share of districts reporting that they had not used menu cycles fell from 35.7% to 22.9%.

For some menu-related activities of these programs, the pace of change remained high. For example, the share of all districts with an increase in the number of new menu items rose from 71.4% to 80.9% while the share of all districts with an increased number of fruits and/or vegetables offered remained high at 72.1%. This would seem to be further evidence that districts are implementing the SMI incrementally and that this is at least partially responsible for the sustained pace of change that is evident in these findings.

The largest single change in a program feature occurred for portion sizes by age/grade level. Survey results for SY 1997/98 showed that 53.6% of all districts had increased the use of portion sizes by age/grade level since the previous school year. Once a school district has implemented use of portion size by age/grade level, it is unlikely they would indicate further changes in this practice in the following year. The drop in districts reporting increased use of portion sizes (from 53.6% in SY 1997/98 to 25.4% in SY 1998/99) is almost equivalent to the increase in districts reporting "no change" in use of portion sizes over the two school years. This is probably not surprising since once an SFA has moved to implement portion sizes by age/grade groupings, they are unlikely to make further changes the following year.

Table VI-9: Changes in Menu Related Features of Programs From the Previous Year in Public NSLP School Districts, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Program feature	Increase		No change		Decrease		Eliminated		Never had	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)									
Use of menu cycles	22.1	19.7	40.3	55.2	1.2	1.8	0.7	0.4	35.7	22.9
Use of centralized menu planning	15.9	10.1	64.7	70.0	1.1	0.8	1.1	0.4	17.2	18.7
Use of decentralized menu planning	2.8	1.3	35.5	26.6	4.9	3.9	2.7	3.2	52.7	65.1
Availability of self-serve foods/food bars	20.7	21.1	48.0	51.8	3.6	3.0	2.7	1.0	25.1	23.1
Availability of *a la carte* in elementary schools	10.6	12.8	43.1	39.0	2.0	1.7	1.8	0.8	42.5	45.6
Availability of *a la carte* in middle/secondary schools	23.9	30.9	52.0	43.9	2.1	2.0	0.8	0.4	21.2	22.7
Number of menu choices for reimbursable meals	36.2	42.5	53.0	46.5	2.8	2.6	0.5	0.2	7.5	8.2
Number of new menu items	71.4	80.9	23.9	16.4	2.3	1.8	0.0	0.0	2.4	0.9
Portion sizes by age/grade level	53.6	25.4	42.0	71.7	2.2	1.7	0.3	0.1	1.9	1.1
Opportunity for local cafeteria options	12.7	9.6	61.4	65.2	3.7	2.9	0.7	0.4	21.5	21.9
Number of fruits and/or vegetables offered	76.2	72.1	22.0	26.6	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.7
Variation of menu items among age/grade categories	42.3	37.9	50.3	56.2	1.6	0.9	0.2	0.0	5.7	5.0
Marketing of menus	21.1	18.8	66.7	71.8	1.0	0.6	0.2	0.0	11.1	8.8
Availability of offer vs. serve in elementary schools	16.8	13.5	71.5	75.3	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.3	10.1	10.2
Physical layout of cafeteria	10.3	10.0	84.8	86.5	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.1	4.1	3.3

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

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Food Procurement and Preparation

Results of the first year survey conducted during SY 1997/98 revealed that school districts had made numerous changes in their food procurement practices following implementation of the SMI. This included increased purchases of fresh fruit and vegetables and of low-fat and reduced-fat foods, greater attention to requiring nutrition information from vendors, and increased use of product specifications.

Results from the survey conducted during SY 1998/99 are compared to those from year one in Table VI-10. They generally indicate a continuation of the changed practices observed the year before. A majority or near-majority of public NSLP school districts continue to:

- increase their purchases of fresh fruit and vegetables (68.8%)
- increase their purchases of low-fat and/or reduced-fat foods (69.4%)
- require additional nutrition information from vendors (71.2%)
- make increasing use of product specifications (48.8%)

As last year, the survey results for SY 1998/99 indicate that a surprisingly large share of all districts (31.6%) increased their use of USDA donated commodities. The results also indicate that slightly less than 20% of all districts were buying pre-plated meals in SY 1998/99 and that the share of all districts procuring food in this form is probably declining.

The findings for SY 1998/99 also reveal that while the share of districts that use purchasing cooperatives appears to be holding steady at around 68%, the use of cooperatives by these districts continues to grow, though not dramatically.

A comparison of reported changes in food preparation practices for SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99 is shown in Table VI-11. The share of all districts reporting increased use of the specified preparation practices was generally down from the previous year, though still high. As more and more districts adopt these practices, it is to be expected that the rate of change will diminish. That appears to be what these numbers are indicating.

Table VI-10: Changes in Food Procurement Practices From the Previous Year in Public NSLP School Districts, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Practice	Increase		No change		Decrease		Eliminated		Never had	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	---(percent)---									
Purchase of fresh fruit and vegetables	74.7	68.8	23.1	30.1	0.7	0.6	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.5
Purchase of prepared foods	16.9	16.5	70.4	72.8	10.2	8.9	0.2	0.1	2.4	1.8
Purchase of pre-plated meals from outside vendors	1.1	0.7	14.4	15.8	1.6	1.5	2.5	1.8	80.5	80.2
Use of USDA donated commodities	25.0	31.6	68.8	62.5	2.8	3.6	1.0	0.6	2.4	1.7
Purchase of low-fat/reduced-fat foods	81.2	69.4	16.3	29.1	0.8	0.5	0.1	0.1	1.6	0.8
Requiring nutrition information from vendors	84.2	71.2	13.1	26.8	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	2.4	1.7
Use and content of product specification	70.4	48.8	27.5	49.4	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	2.1	1.5
Use of purchasing cooperatives	17.1	13.2	50.1	53.3	0.7	0.7	0.3	0.8	31.8	32.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-11: Changes in Food Preparation Practices From the Previous Year in Public NSLP School Districts, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Practice	Increase		No change		Decrease		Eliminated		Never had	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)									
Use of standardized recipes	60.3	47.8	35.9	50.2	0.8	0.8	0.3	0.0	2.7	1.2
Use of new USDA recipes	60.4	44.4	35.0	52.0	1.5	1.9	0.5	0.2	2.7	1.5
Time devoted to recording food production information	68.1	63.0	28.2	34.7	2.0	1.8	0.0	0.2	1.6	0.3
Frequency with which recipes modified to improve nutritional content of meals	80.2	71.1	17.4	27.7	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	2.1	1.1
Frequency with which preparation methods modified to improve nutritional content of meals	77.2	70.9	20.7	28.3	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	1.7	0.7
Purchase of new equipment	22.2	27.4	73.1	68.8	1.1	1.7	0.5	0.6	3.0	1.6

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Number of Food Choices

As in the first year survey, respondents were asked about changes in the number of food choices they offered as part of their reimbursable meals in SY 1998/99. In the first year they had been asked what changes had occurred "since implementation of the SMI." The second year survey asked school food directors what changes had occurred since "last school year." The results, including comparisons of responses for SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99, appear in Tables VI-12 through VI-15. In brief, they indicate the following:

- To the extent there have been changes in the number of food choices, in nearly all instances the change has been toward increased choice. The only exception of consequence is in the number of desserts offered. Overall, around 9% of all districts reported fewer desserts offered, though about twice as many districts did the opposite, i.e. increased the number of desserts offered.
- Looking across all districts, a slight majority made no changes in the number of options for most food categories. Some differences are evident between elementary and middle/secondary with a slightly larger share of middle/secondary experiencing increased choice.
- Among the food categories, increased choices of fruit and grain-based products were most prevalent in elementary schools while in middle/secondary schools, increased choice of fruit, entrees, grain-based products, and vegetable was reported by a significant share. Milk choices were least likely to be increased, followed by choices of dessert.
- In comparison with responses for SY 1997/98, responses in SY 1998/99 generally suggest that the pace of change is slowing and that an increasing share of districts are probably approaching or achieving a new equilibrium in terms of the number of choices they are offering their students. While there are exceptions to this, e.g. a larger share of middle/secondary schools increasing the number of entrees offered, this appears to be the general trend.
- When compared by size, a somewhat larger share of districts in the middle size categories (1,000 to 24,999) report that they have increased the number of food choices. This relationship exists across most food categories for both elementary and middle/secondary schools and is evident in the results for both survey years.
- No major differences are apparent in the number of food choices offered by districts using different menu planning systems, though there are differences. For example, a larger share of districts using the enhanced food-based system report an increase in the number of grain-based portions offered. This is presumably driven

by the SMI requirements that districts using this system provide more (or larger) servings of these foods than under the former meal pattern requirements.

Portion Sizes

Changes in portion size offer school food directors one means of adapting their menus to the nutritional objectives represented by the SMI. Implicit in these objectives is the need for menus that contain more fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods and reduced quantities of food that are high in fat. The enhanced food-based menu planning system expressly calls for smaller servings of meat or meat alternatives and larger servings of fruits, vegetables, and grain-based foods.

In the first year survey conducted in SY 1997/98, school food directors were asked whether they had "increased," "decreased," or made "no change" in the portion size of their reimbursable meals since implementing the SMI. Survey findings generally confirmed that districts had changed portion sizes in ways that were consistent with the adoption of healthier diets. A majority of all districts increased the portion size of fruit, vegetables, and grain/bread. The portion size of entrees and desserts, in contrast, remained unchanged for around 80% of all districts.

Findings from the second year survey collected in SY 1998/99 reveal a continuation of the same pattern of change as measured the previous year, though with fewer districts making changes. To the extent districts are using changes in portion size to reach their nutritional targets, it appears that many of them have already done so. This is particularly evident among those districts with an enrollment of 25,000 or more for which 80 to 90% reported no change in the portion size of most food categories in SY 1998/99.

To the extent districts continued to make changes in portion size in SY 1998/99, most were increased servings of fruit, vegetables, and grain-based foods. Very few districts reported reductions in portion size. To the extent portion sizes were smaller they were for desserts. For elementary schools, a slightly larger share of districts reported a decline in the portion size of desserts than reported an increase in portion size (6.8% versus 5.1%).

A comparison of changes in portion size across the different types of menu planning systems fails to reveal any major differences, with the possible exception of the somewhat higher rate of change among the enhanced food-based systems that was noted earlier.

Table VI-12: Changes in the Number of Food Choices Offered in Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Elementary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

School year / food category	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 – 4,999			5,000 – 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	20.4	77.6	2.0	27.7	69.7	2.6	36.7	60.2	3.1	28.3	67.5	4.2	25.8	71.8	2.4
Fruit	56.7	43.0	0.3	64.1	35.4	0.5	65.9	32.8	1.3	56.3	43.8	0.0	61.0	38.5	0.5
Vegetables	36.0	62.3	1.7	44.4	54.7	0.8	51.4	46.9	1.7	38.8	60.8	0.0	41.6	57.1	1.3
Grain/Bread	44.7	54.9	0.4	61.2	37.9	0.9	67.8	30.9	1.4	60.4	38.3	1.7	54.9	44.4	0.7
Milk	12.7	86.8	0.4	12.4	85.2	2.3	9.5	87.1	3.4	6.7	90.4	2.5	12.1	86.3	1.6
Desserts	12.4	79.7	7.9	20.7	68.0	11.3	24.7	59.9	15.4	27.5	65.4	6.7	17.8	72.0	10.3
1998/99															
Entrees	21.4	76.8	1.9	32.7	65.1	2.2	36.4	61.4	2.1	24.0	74.2	1.3	28.4	69.6	2.0
Fruit	40.5	58.7	0.9	55.5	44.0	0.5	53.7	45.6	0.7	32.8	67.2	0.0	48.7	50.6	0.7
Vegetables	29.7	67.6	2.7	37.8	61.4	0.8	37.7	61.3	1.0	26.6	72.1	1.3	34.1	64.3	1.6
Grain/Bread	36.8	62.2	1.0	45.1	54.2	0.8	48.1	51.5	0.4	31.4	68.1	0.4	41.9	57.3	0.8
Milk	10.7	88.5	0.9	9.3	89.6	1.1	7.3	91.8	0.9	8.7	88.2	3.1	9.5	89.4	1.0
Desserts	13.0	78.3	8.7	17.4	72.9	9.6	21.4	68.2	10.4	16.2	76.9	7.0	16.1	74.7	9.2

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

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Table VI-13: Changes in the Number of Food Choices Offered in Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Middle/Secondary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

School year / food category	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 – 4,999			5,000 – 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	26.9	70.8	2.3	42.2	54.2	3.6	43.5	52.5	3.9	38.3	60.0	1.7	36.8	60.0	3.2
Fruit	65.4	33.3	1.3	69.2	29.9	0.9	66.2	32.7	1.2	56.3	42.9	0.8	67.1	31.8	1.1
Vegetables	52.4	45.2	2.4	59.3	39.0	1.7	58.3	40.1	1.5	48.3	50.4	1.3	56.5	41.6	1.9
Grain/Bread	47.7	51.7	0.6	62.3	36.9	0.8	67.6	31.4	0.9	60.0	38.3	1.7	57.8	41.4	0.8
Milk	14.9	83.9	1.1	12.2	85.0	2.8	9.0	87.6	3.4	5.8	91.7	2.5	12.6	85.1	2.3
Desserts	14.6	78.1	7.4	24.0	64.9	11.1	24.1	61.7	14.2	29.6	65.4	5.0	20.7	69.2	10.1
1998/99															
Entrees	35.6	61.9	2.5	59.6	38.5	1.9	56.9	41.0	2.1	45.0	53.7	1.3	51.2	46.7	2.1
Fruit	47.5	50.7	1.8	58.4	40.9	0.7	58.8	40.8	0.4	38.5	61.5	0.0	54.5	44.5	1.0
Vegetables	41.1	55.9	3.0	47.7	51.1	1.2	45.1	53.8	1.1	33.3	65.8	0.9	44.9	53.4	1.7
Grain/Bread	38.3	60.5	1.2	49.3	50.0	0.7	52.2	47.5	0.4	39.4	60.2	0.4	46.2	52.9	0.8
Milk	14.7	83.7	1.6	10.9	87.7	1.3	8.6	90.7	0.7	9.1	88.7	2.2	11.7	87.0	1.3
Desserts	13.1	77.8	9.1	21.0	70.6	8.4	22.4	68.3	9.4	20.3	72.3	6.9	18.6	72.7	8.7

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-14: Changes in the Number of Food Choices Offered in Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Elementary Schools, by Type of Menu Planning System, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

School year / food category	Type of Menu Planning														
	NSMP			ANSMP			Enhanced Food-based			Traditional Food-based			Other		
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	27.1	69.1	3.8	27.1	69.5	3.4	28.5	68.9	2.5	24.2	74.1	1.7	29.3	64.8	5.8
Fruit	53.4	45.4	1.2	62.5	37.5	--	59.8	39.3	0.9	62.7	37.0	0.3	62.3	37.7	--
Vegetables	39.5	58.9	1.6	30.4	68.7	0.9	45.3	53.8	0.9	40.8	57.8	1.4	54.1	45.9	--
Grain/Bread	47.3	50.8	2.0	55.1	44.9	--	68.6	30.7	0.7	51.7	47.9	0.3	52.5	47.5	--
Milk	12.0	85.8	2.2	12.6	86.5	0.9	12.2	86.0	1.8	12.3	86.4	1.3	8.6	91.4	--
Desserts	20.2	69.6	10.2	20.0	68.1	11.8	26.1	64.8	9.0	13.2	75.5	11.3	17.9	79.9	2.3
1998/99															
Entrees	31.3	65.8	3.0	21.0	68.9	10.1	27.1	71.7	1.2	28.2	70.2	1.6	25.5	74.5	--
Fruit	46.0	52.8	1.2	47.9	44.5	7.6	50.4	49.5	0.1	48.1	51.4	0.4	54.9	45.1	--
Vegetables	34.2	64.3	1.4	38.7	53.7	7.6	34.1	65.0	0.9	33.1	65.2	1.7	31.9	68.6	--
Grain/Bread	34.4	64.2	1.3	34.8	57.4	7.6	55.2	44.6	0.2	38.3	61.3	0.4	28.4	71.6	--
Milk	8.8	89.6	1.6	9.2	83.6	7.1	8.1	91.3	0.6	10.6	88.8	0.6	6.9	88.2	5.4
Desserts	21.2	72.9	5.9	11.5	69.8	18.7	17.5	73.4	9.1	14.6	76.0	9.4	17.2	75.5	7.4

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-15: Changes in the Number of Food Choices Offered in Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Middle/Secondary Schools, by Type of Menu Planning System, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

School year / food category	Type of Menu Planning														
	NSMP			ANSMP			Enhanced Food-based			Traditional Food-based			Other		
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
							(percent)								
1997/98															
Entrees	36.1	59.7	4.3	42.5	51.8	5.7	39.7	56.6	3.7	34.6	63.2	2.2	50.6	49.4	--
Fruit	64.7	34.1	1.1	70.0	30.0	--	66.4	32.3	1.3	66.9	32.0	1.2	70.1	28.9	0.9
Vegetables	52.8	46.1	1.2	67.5	31.3	1.2	57.0	42.0	1.0	55.7	41.8	2.5	62.4	36.7	0.9
Grain/Bread	49.4	49.2	1.5	67.9	32.1	--	71.3	28.2	0.5	53.9	45.5	0.6	51.0	49.0	--
Milk	11.3	85.6	3.1	18.4	80.4	1.2	13.2	84.5	2.3	12.3	85.5	2.2	3.7	96.3	--
Desserts	22.7	66.2	11.1	30.6	67.3	2.1	26.3	65.5	8.3	16.8	71.7	11.5	19.3	78.3	2.4
1998/99															
Entrees	47.3	50.2	2.5	39.1	50.9	10.4	57.9	40.5	1.6	48.8	49.5	1.6	52.0	47.4	--
Fruit	46.6	52.1	1.2	42.3	49.7	8.0	56.1	43.8	0.1	56.2	43.0	0.8	48.5	51.5	--
Vegetables	38.2	60.2	1.6	36.4	53.0	10.7	49.0	50.3	0.6	44.7	53.7	1.6	28.6	70.9	--
Grain/Bread	37.1	61.4	1.4	29.9	62.1	8.0	60.6	39.0	0.4	43.5	56.2	0.3	43.9	55.6	--
Milk	9.3	88.5	2.2	13.0	78.7	8.0	8.9	90.5	0.7	13.7	85.4	0.9	11.2	83.2	5.6
Desserts	20.1	74.4	5.5	16.0	71.9	12.1	21.4	70.3	8.3	16.9	73.4	9.7	19.9	74.5	4.6

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-16: Changes in the Portion Size of Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Elementary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

School year / food category	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 – 4,999			5,000 – 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	13.8	82.6	3.6	10.7	84.1	5.2	12.4	80.2	7.5	4.6	84.2	11.3	12.1	82.9	4.9
Fruit	54.2	44.9	0.8	55.9	42.9	1.2	57.2	42.4	0.5	43.3	55.8	0.8	55.1	44.0	0.9
Vegetables	48.9	50.1	1.0	50.9	48.0	1.1	54.5	44.8	0.7	38.3	60.0	1.7	50.3	48.7	1.0
Grain/Bread	53.9	45.6	0.6	64.0	35.0	1.0	67.2	32.3	0.6	57.1	41.3	1.7	59.9	39.3	0.8
Milk	2.9	97.1	0.0	0.8	98.3	0.9	1.5	98.4	0.2	0.8	97.9	0.8	1.8	97.8	0.4
Desserts	6.8	84.7	8.5	11.7	80.4	8.0	14.7	76.6	8.7	13.8	82.9	2.9	10.0	81.8	8.2
1998/99															
Entrees	12.3	85.5	2.2	9.1	87.1	3.8	9.3	86.0	4.8	3.9	92.6	3.5	10.2	86.5	3.3
Fruit	32.7	65.5	1.7	24.2	74.9	0.8	25.1	73.9	0.9	15.7	82.5	1.7	27.5	71.3	1.2
Vegetables	29.2	69.3	1.5	23.2	75.3	1.5	26.0	73.4	0.6	15.3	83.4	1.3	25.7	72.9	1.4
Grain/Bread	29.8	68.5	1.8	31.2	67.9	0.9	34.3	64.5	1.2	19.2	80.3	0.4	30.7	68.0	1.3
Milk	3.6	95.5	0.9	0.4	99.2	0.4	0.4	99.6	0.0	0.4	99.6	0.0	1.7	97.8	0.5
Desserts	4.5	86.7	8.8	5.0	89.7	5.3	7.6	86.1	6.2	6.1	90.0	3.9	5.1	88.1	6.8

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-17: Changes in the Portion Size of Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Middle/Secondary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

School year / food category	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 – 4,999			5,000 – 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	15.9	80.5	3.7	19.4	77.0	3.6	16.8	76.4	6.8	12.9	79.2	7.5	17.6	78.2	4.2
Fruit	57.0	41.7	1.3	60.8	39.0	0.3	57.4	42.3	0.3	46.3	52.9	0.8	58.6	40.7	0.7
Vegetables	54.2	44.0	1.8	57.0	42.1	0.9	55.6	44.0	0.4	41.7	58.3	0.0	55.5	43.4	1.1
Grain/Bread	59.1	39.9	1.0	69.2	29.4	1.4	69.4	29.8	0.8	63.8	34.6	1.3	65.5	33.4	1.2
Milk	5.0	95.0	0.0	1.8	97.6	0.6	0.9	98.9	0.2	0.0	100.0	0.0	2.8	96.9	0.3
Desserts	7.0	85.4	7.7	13.5	78.8	7.7	15.9	76.0	8.1	17.1	80.4	2.5	11.6	80.8	7.6
1998/99															
Entrees	18.4	78.7	2.9	17.5	80.4	2.1	17.0	80.2	2.9	9.5	89.6	0.9	17.5	80.1	2.4
Fruit	29.6	68.4	2.0	28.0	71.8	0.3	27.3	72.3	0.5	18.2	81.8	0.0	28.1	71.1	0.9
Vegetables	29.4	68.6	2.0	27.9	71.7	0.4	25.7	74.3	0.0	13.4	86.6	0.0	27.6	71.5	0.8
Grain/Bread	28.7	68.9	2.4	34.1	65.1	0.8	35.5	64.2	0.3	26.0	73.6	0.4	32.3	66.5	1.2
Milk	4.3	94.4	1.3	1.8	97.8	0.4	0.6	99.4	0.0	0.4	99.6	0.0	2.4	97.0	0.6
Desserts	6.6	86.3	7.1	7.2	87.2	5.6	9.2	85.1	5.7	8.2	88.7	3.0	7.3	86.7	6.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-18: Changes in the Portion Size of Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Elementary Schools, by Type of Menu Planning System, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

School year / food category	Type of Menu Planning														
	NSMP			ANSMP			Enhanced Food-based			Traditional Food-based			Other		
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	18.0	70.8	11.2	6.1	84.9	9.0	12.3	83.3	4.4	9.9	86.7	3.4	7.8	85.8	6.4
Fruit	54.1	44.5	1.4	33.8	64.7	1.4	68.6	31.1	0.3	49.9	49.2	0.9	51.0	46.3	2.7
Vegetables	48.4	50.2	1.4	32.3	66.2	1.4	64.9	34.8	0.3	43.9	55.1	1.0	43.3	54.0	2.7
Grain/Bread	51.7	46.8	1.5	38.3	60.3	1.4	77.3	22.2	0.5	54.5	44.8	0.7	54.7	45.3	--
Milk	1.6	96.9	1.5	--	100.0	--	1.0	98.9	0.1	2.3	97.5	0.1	--	100.0	--
Desserts	11.7	78.5	9.8	5.3	81.4	13.3	16.1	76.8	7.2	6.8	84.7	8.5	21.7	75.9	2.4
1998/99															
Entrees	10.0	80.9	9.0	17.7	68.2	14.1	11.8	87.2	1.0	9.0	88.9	2.1	3.9	92.2	3.9
Fruit	28.5	68.8	2.7	30.6	60.8	8.3	32.1	67.2	0.7	24.2	75.3	0.5	21.1	79.4	--
Vegetables	27.0	70.2	2.9	28.8	62.7	8.3	30.5	69.0	0.5	22.6	76.5	0.9	19.1	81.4	--
Grain/Bread	28.0	70.5	1.6	30.0	61.5	8.3	39.7	59.5	0.8	26.7	72.3	0.9	19.6	80.4	--
Milk	2.4	97.4	0.1	5.1	89.2	5.5	1.1	98.3	0.6	1.9	97.9	0.3	--	100.0	--
Desserts	8.0	83.8	8.2	5.8	77.4	16.6	6.1	87.1	6.8	4.0	90.5	5.5	4.9	95.1	--

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-19: Changes in the Portion Size of Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Middle/Secondary Schools, by Type of Menu Planning System, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

School year / food category	Type of Menu Planning														
	NSMP			ANSMP			Enhanced Food-based			Traditional Food-based			Other		
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
								(percent)							
1997/98															
Entrees	25.5	68.5	6.1	14.7	75.0	10.2	17.1	78.7	4.2	14.9	81.9	3.2	16.2	81.5	2.3
Fruit	58.0	41.2	0.7	44.3	55.7	--	72.0	27.3	0.7	52.6	46.9	0.6	48.3	51.7	--
Vegetables	53.9	45.4	0.7	44.2	53.9	2.0	68.2	31.5	0.3	49.1	49.4	1.5	48.3	51.7	--
Grain/Bread	57.3	40.6	2.1	50.6	47.4	2.0	80.8	18.4	0.8	61.2	37.7	1.1	59.5	40.5	--
Milk	1.5	97.8	0.7	--	100.0	--	2.5	97.3	0.2	3.3	96.5	0.2	--	100.0	--
Desserts	13.9	77.8	8.2	13.8	81.8	4.4	16.5	76.3	7.3	8.1	83.4	8.5	22.5	75.1	2.4
1998/99															
Entrees	22.5	72.6	4.9	15.4	71.0	13.6	18.6	80.0	1.4	15.1	83.4	1.5	15.3	84.2	--
Fruit	28.3	70.4	1.3	22.5	70.4	7.1	33.6	65.9	0.5	25.8	73.8	0.4	16.8	83.2	--
Vegetables	27.3	71.4	1.3	28.4	64.5	7.1	32.6	66.9	0.5	25.1	74.5	0.4	14.8	85.2	--
Grain/Bread	26.8	71.8	1.4	27.5	65.4	7.1	43.1	56.0	0.8	29.1	69.8	1.1	27.6	71.9	--
Milk	3.0	96.8	0.1	8.6	84.3	7.1	1.2	98.2	0.6	2.8	96.8	0.3	--	100.0	--
Desserts	9.4	84.2	6.4	12.4	75.4	12.1	10.1	84.2	5.8	4.9	89.7	5.5	8.2	91.8	--

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

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Number of A La Carte Items Offered

A la carte food sales are the principal option for school children who want to eat school food but do not want to be limited to the foods offered as part of the reimbursable meal. Since Federal benefits are limited to the reimbursable meal, a la carte food sales are beyond the direct influence of the SMI, though they are subject to competitive foods regulations (7 CFR 210.11). In those districts where a la carte food sales are offered, these foods compete directly with reimbursable meals, and therefore, with the accomplishment of SMI's nutritional objectives.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, many schools, particularly at the elementary level, do not offer a la carte. Across all districts, 45.6% reported that they never had a la carte items in their elementary schools while 22.7% reported never having them in their middle/secondary schools in SY 1998/99. These percentages are only slightly higher than those reported the year before (42.5% and 21.2%, respectively). An additional 0.8% of all districts reported eliminating a la carte in their elementary schools in SY 1998/99, while 0.4% reported eliminating a la carte in their middle/secondary schools during the same year.

A somewhat different situation exists for elementary schools as compared to middle/secondary schools. Among elementary schools, there appears to have been a modest increase in the portion of districts not offering a la carte items. This is particularly evident among the smallest school districts (less than 1,000) of which more than 70% reported not offering all food categories except beverages. Among those districts in which elementary schools offer a la carte, the majority report no change in the number of items offered at lunch. However, to the extent there are changes they are far more likely to be increases than decreases.

Among middle/secondary schools, there was also a modest increase in SY 1998/99 in the number of districts indicating that a la carte items were not offered at lunch. However, for those districts where the middle/secondary schools offered a la carte at lunch, the number of a la carte items offered rose appreciably between SY 1997/98 and SY 1998/99. The increase is evident across all food categories though the rate of increase was greatest for entrees, beverages, and snacks. Of all the comparisons in Table VI-21, it is noted that the increased offerings of snack items in the 5,000-24,999 and 25,000 or more size ranges rose most dramatically.

Table VI-20: Changes in the Number of A La Carte Items Offered at Lunch Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Elementary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

School year / Food category	District size																All districts			
	Less than 1,000				1,000 – 4,999				5,000 – 24,999				25,000 or more							
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered
	(percent)																			
1997/98																				
Entrees	6.7	32.3	1.9	59.1	10.4	53.6	1.5	34.5	10.8	54.5	0.7	34.0	7.5	67.9	1.3	23.3	8.8	44.7	1.6	44.9
Dessert	4.3	32.1	1.5	62.1	9.2	54.6	2.9	33.2	10.9	58.6	1.8	28.8	12.1	62.1	4.2	21.7	7.3	45.5	2.2	45.0
Beverages (including milk)	6.6	43.6	0.6	49.2	12.3	64.3	0.1	23.3	14.1	68.5	0.8	16.5	15.4	71.3	0.8	12.5	10.1	56.0	0.4	33.5
Side dishes	6.3	29.4	0.7	63.6	10.9	53.2	0.7	35.2	10.8	55.2	0.8	33.2	9.6	65.8	--	24.2	8.9	43.4	0.7	47.1
Snacks	6.7	28.6	0.9	63.8	14.0	50.1	2.2	33.8	16.1	53.2	1.4	29.2	17.5	58.3	1.7	22.5	11.2	41.3	1.5	46.0
1998/99																				
Entrees	6.2	21.8	0.5	71.5	11.2	47.0	0.8	41.0	14.8	48.8	1.3	35.1	11.4	61.1	0.9	26.6	9.6	37.3	0.7	52.4
Dessert	3.2	23.2	0.9	72.8	9.6	49.2	1.6	39.6	15.7	49.2	2.3	32.7	9.6	64.2	0.4	25.8	7.8	38.9	1.4	51.9
Beverages (including milk)	7.0	33.2	0.6	59.3	14.2	56.5	0.7	28.6	20.4	58.6	0.7	20.3	20.1	68.6	--	11.4	12.1	47.8	0.6	39.4
Side dishes	3.9	22.9	0.8	72.5	9.3	49.7	0.4	40.6	11.7	53.2	0.3	34.9	8.7	65.5	--	25.8	7.4	39.6	0.5	52.6
Snacks	7.1	16.1	1.3	75.5	15.4	37.9	1.1	45.6	22.6	39.7	1.2	36.6	24.9	49.8	0.4	24.9	13.1	29.5	1.2	56.3

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

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Table VI-21: Changes in the Number of A La Carte Items Offered at Lunch Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Middle/Secondary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

School year / Food category	District size																All districts			
	Less than 1,000				1,000 – 4,999				5,000 – 24,999				25,000 or more							
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered
	(percent)																			
1997/98																				
Entrees	14.3	49.8	0.9	34.9	28.9	59.7	2.2	9.3	30.3	62.0	1.1	6.4	26.3	69.2	-	4.6	23.8	56.7	1.5	18.0
Dessert	10.5	53.2	1.9	34.4	21.7	65.5	3.3	9.6	23.4	69.7	2.3	4.7	20.0	72.1	2.9	5.4	17.9	61.8	2.6	17.7
Beverages (including milk)	12.2	55.5	1.1	31.1	28.1	64.6	0.9	6.4	30.7	64.9	0.6	3.7	30.0	64.6	1.7	3.8	22.8	61.4	0.9	14.8
Side dishes	12.3	51.7	1.3	34.7	27.6	61.8	1.2	9.5	22.1	71.2	1.2	5.5	19.2	75.8	0.8	4.2	21.1	59.8	1.2	17.8
Snacks	22.7	40.8	0.9	35.6	35.6	51.9	2.1	10.4	33.9	58.7	1.8	5.5	31.7	62.5	0.8	4.6	30.6	49.1	1.6	18.6
1998/99																				
Entrees	27.9	24.1	2.1	45.8	43.2	43.2	1.1	12.4	44.0	47.3	1.9	6.8	29.4	63.6	2.6	4.3	38.2	38.2	1.6	22.0
Dessert	11.3	43.6	2.7	42.4	23.9	61.4	2.8	11.9	28.8	61.4	2.7	7.2	16.5	80.1	0.4	3.0	20.3	56.3	2.7	20.7
Beverages (including milk)	21.2	40.7	1.5	36.6	45.3	44.4	1.0	9.3	48.9	45.5	1.3	4.3	37.7	59.3	1.7	1.7	38.0	43.8	1.2	17.0
Side dishes	14.2	43.8	2.4	39.6	28.3	59.4	1.0	11.2	28.4	62.9	1.4	7.2	16.9	77.5	1.3	3.9	23.5	55.6	1.5	19.4
Snacks	31.0	19.5	1.9	47.6	47.6	37.4	2.1	12.8	54.4	35.3	2.5	7.9	45.0	49.4	1.7	3.9	43.4	31.6	2.1	22.9

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Plate Waste

Plate waste is the amount of food that is left on the plate uneaten. It is used as an indication of the acceptability of the food that is offered. Direct physical measures of plate waste are difficult and costly to achieve and were beyond the scope of this study. As a "second-best" indicator of plate waste, school food directors were asked for their perceptions regarding changes in the amount of food students waste at lunchtime since school lunches were required to comply with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The same question was asked in both survey years.

Results in the first year, SY 1997/98, revealed that a majority of all districts reported no change in food waste following implementation of the SMI for all seven of the food groups examined. Of those respondents who perceived a change in the amount of waste, with the exception of cooked vegetables, more respondents felt that there was less waste following adoption of the SMI than that there was more waste. For cooked vegetables, more than twice as many reported more waste than less (26.6% versus 11.9%). In summary, the First Year results indicated that the SMI had a neutral-to-positive impact on food waste.

In the second year survey, respondents were asked to compare the amount of food wasted in SY 1998/99 to the amount wasted prior to the adoption of the SMI. The second year findings indicate a small but continuing improvement. As in the previous year, the predominant perception of school food directors is that there has been no change in waste, compared to the situation prior to the SMI. Depending on which food group is considered, the share of all directors reporting "no change" ranges between 52% and 76%. Of those who perceive a change in the amount wasted, roughly twice as many directors feel that there is less waste as those that feel there is more.

As in the previous year, the sole exception to this finding is for cooked vegetables (other than french fries) for which more directors report that there is now more waste as opposed to the number who report less waste. Despite this, 58% of all respondents report no change in waste.

Perceptions of plate waste are largely consistent across districts of different sizes and across those using different types of menu planning systems, with a few exceptions. A somewhat larger share of the respondents using the enhanced food-based system reported more waste of foods in the bread/grain category. It is noted that districts using this system are required to offer additional or larger servings in this food group. They are also required to offer additional or larger servings of fruits and vegetables, though there is no evidence of greater waste in these categories. Furthermore, the gradual improvement that is evident in the findings for all districts combined can also be seen in the SY 1998/99 findings for districts disaggregated by type and size.

Table VI-22: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP School Districts, by Size of District, SY 1998/99

Food group	District size																All districts			
	Less than 1,000				1,000 - 4,999				5,000 - 24,999				25,000 or more							
	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know
	(percent)																			
Milk	5.4	12.8	77.2	4.6	4.6	12.8	75.8	6.7	3.5	14.6	76.7	5.1	8.2	15.1	70.7	5.6	4.9	13.0	76.4	5.7
Main dish/entrée	11.1	21.6	62.6	4.7	9.5	21.1	62.9	6.5	9.0	17.4	68.8	4.8	7.3	20.7	65.5	6.5	10.0	20.9	63.6	5.5
Grains/breads	9.9	24.0	62.1	3.9	12.1	19.6	61.5	6.8	18.1	17.8	59.9	4.2	12.5	15.5	64.7	6.9	12.0	21.2	61.6	5.2
Salad/raw vegetables	14.0	27.1	55.0	3.9	16.5	27.1	49.5	6.8	17.4	26.4	51.5	4.7	9.9	27.2	56.9	6.0	15.5	27.0	52.2	5.3
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	23.6	12.9	59.5	4.1	23.9	13.8	56.1	6.2	24.6	12.4	58.3	4.7	12.9	14.2	65.5	6.9	23.7	13.1	58.0	5.1
Fruit	9.0	31.2	55.9	4.0	11.2	26.1	56.8	5.8	10.3	28.2	58.0	3.5	6.0	27.2	61.2	5.6	10.1	28.6	56.7	4.7
Desserts	1.8	21.3	72.5	4.3	2.7	22.1	68.9	6.3	1.9	17.4	73.8	6.9	1.7	13.8	74.6	9.9	2.2	21.0	71.2	5.6

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

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Table VI-23: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Following Implementation of the SMI Guidelines in Public NSLP School Districts with Enrollment Less than 1,000 Students, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Food Group	Waste More		Waste less		No change		Don't know	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Milk	7.1	5.4	10.2	12.8	79.0	77.2	3.7	4.6
Main dish/entrée	12.0	11.1	17.4	21.6	67.6	62.6	3.0	4.7
Grains/breads	13.4	9.9	20.8	24.0	63.3	62.1	2.5	3.9
Salad/raw vegetables	16.8	14.0	24.7	27.1	55.6	55.0	2.9	3.9
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	28.2	23.6	10.5	12.9	58.3	59.5	3.0	4.1
Fruit	12.0	9.0	24.6	31.2	61.0	55.9	2.5	4.0
Desserts	4.8	1.8	21.3	21.3	70.4	72.5	3.4	4.3

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-24: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Following Implementation of the SMI Guidelines in Public NSLP School Districts with Enrollment Between 1,000 and 4,999 Students, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Food Group	Waste More		Waste less		No change		Don't know	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Milk	3.5	4.6	11.8	12.8	78.0	75.8	6.7	6.7
Main dish/entrée	10.3	9.5	17.3	21.1	64.7	62.9	7.7	6.5
Grains/breads	16.0	12.1	20.3	19.6	56.2	61.5	7.5	6.8
Salad/raw vegetables	16.3	16.5	25.8	27.1	50.9	49.5	7.0	6.8
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	25.9	23.9	12.8	13.8	54.4	56.1	6.9	6.2
Fruit	11.1	11.2	25.0	26.1	57.2	56.8	6.7	5.8
Desserts	3.0	2.7	19.3	22.1	69.8	68.9	7.9	6.3

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-25: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Following Implementation of the SMI Guidelines in Public NSLP School Districts with Enrollment Between 5,000 and 24,999 Students, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Food Group	Waste More		Waste less		No change		Don't know	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Milk	4.5	3.5	11.3	14.6	79.1	76.7	5.1	5.1
Main dish/entrée	11.0	9.0	17.4	17.4	66.3	68.8	5.2	4.8
Grains/breads	21.2	18.1	18.4	17.8	55.7	59.9	4.7	4.2
Salad/raw vegetables	18.7	17.4	25.8	26.4	50.2	51.5	5.3	4.7
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	24.3	24.6	13.2	12.4	57.5	58.3	4.9	4.7
Fruit	12.1	10.3	23.7	28.2	60.2	58.0	4.0	3.5
Desserts	2.4	1.9	16.0	17.4	72.6	73.8	9.0	6.9

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-26: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Following Implementation of the SMI Guidelines in Public NSLP School Districts with Enrollment Equal to or Greater Than 25,000 Students, SY 1997/98 and 1998/99

Food Group	Waste More		Waste less		No change		Don't know	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Milk	2.1	8.2	12.5	15.1	79.2	70.7	6.3	5.6
Main dish/entrée	9.6	7.3	17.5	20.7	67.1	65.5	5.8	6.5
Grains/breads	12.9	12.5	15.0	15.5	66.3	64.7	5.8	6.9
Salad/raw vegetables	16.3	9.9	22.5	27.2	53.8	56.9	7.1	6.0
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	20.4	12.9	13.3	14.2	60.0	65.5	6.3	6.9
Fruit	6.3	6.0	22.5	27.2	65.4	61.2	5.8	5.6
Desserts	0.8	1.7	12.1	13.8	80.8	74.6	5.8	9.9

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

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Table VI-27: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Following Implementation of the SMI Guidelines in All Public NSLP School Districts, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Food Group	Waste More		Waste less		No change		Don't know	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Milk	5.1	4.9	11.1	13.0	78.6	76.4	5.2	5.7
Main dish/entrée	11.2	10.0	17.3	20.9	66.2	63.6	5.3	5.5
Grains/breads	15.5	12.0	20.2	21.2	59.4	61.6	4.9	5.2
Salad/raw vegetables	16.9	15.5	25.3	27.0	52.9	52.2	5.0	5.3
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	26.6	23.7	11.9	13.1	56.6	58.0	5.0	5.1
Fruit	11.5	10.1	24.6	28.6	59.4	56.7	4.5	4.7
Desserts	3.7	2.2	19.6	21.0	70.6	71.2	6.1	5.6

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-28: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP School Districts, by Type of Menu Planning System, SY 1998/99

Food group	Type of Menu Planning System																			
	NSMP				ANSMP				Enhanced Food-based				Traditional Food-based				Other			
	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know
	(percent)																			
Milk	5.6	16.1	72.7	5.5	5.4	23.9	70.9	0.0	4.9	11.2	78.0	5.8	4.4	12.0	77.7	5.9	4.3	11.1	79.9	4.7
Main dish/entrée	14.1	19.1	61.0	5.9	12.6	34.5	51.0	1.8	7.6	23.7	63.1	5.5	9.9	19.0	65.7	5.3	12.4	14.1	64.5	9.0
Grains/breads	9.5	21.8	63.1	5.5	9.3	30.9	58.2	1.8	17.0	23.5	54.8	4.6	10.4	19.6	64.8	5.2	12.4	13.7	62.8	11.5
Salad/raw vegetables	15.7	26.4	52.1	5.7	11.5	26.2	62.3	0.0	16.2	26.8	51.9	5.1	15.0	27.2	52.5	5.3	16.2	19.7	55.6	9.0
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	26.5	14.1	54.3	5.1	21.2	14.4	63.4	1.1	22.7	13.4	58.7	5.2	23.6	12.6	58.7	5.2	20.5	9.4	57.7	12.0
Fruit	11.4	28.3	55.6	4.6	7.2	36.8	56.2	0.0	10.3	28.3	56.7	4.8	9.7	28.7	57.1	4.6	9.0	11.1	70.5	9.0
Desserts	3.7	22.1	69.3	5.0	0.9	36.6	61.6	0.9	2.2	22.4	69.3	6.1	1.5	19.7	73.3	5.5	3.0	9.8	78.2	9.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

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Difficulty in Performing Tasks

Implementation of the SMI has imposed new requirements on school food programs in terms of the operational tasks that must be performed. While some of these tasks are not new to SFAs, adoption of the SMI has resulted in many of these tasks becoming an integral part of the menu planning system. These tasks are generally required to ensure that school meals are prepared and served in compliance with the menus as they are planned, regardless of the menu planning option being implemented.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they had difficulty performing any of 10 specified tasks and, if so, to what degree. The same question was asked in the first year survey.

Findings from the second year survey are essentially a mirror image of those from the first year. From the standpoint of level of difficulty, the specified tasks fall into two groups. For 6 of the 10 tasks, 70% or more of all respondents reported "no difficulty" in performing the task. These results are identical to those from the survey conducted the previous year. The second set of tasks are viewed as providing districts with a greater challenge. These tasks and the share of all districts saying that they had experienced "some difficulty" in performing them are as follows:

- documenting last-minute substitutions (51.6%)
- substituting nutritionally-comparable foods (53.5%)
- adhering to standardized recipes (51.6%)
- maintaining food production records (35.1%)

Relatively few districts (ranging from 2% to 9%) report that they experienced "major difficulty" in performing these tasks.

District size appears to have little effect on how districts view the level of difficulty in performing these tasks. To the extent differences are apparent, districts with enrollments of 5,000-24,999 reported having slightly greater difficulty than those in other size categories, though the differences are small. NSMP districts appear to have encountered slightly greater difficulty in performing several of these tasks, compared to districts using the other systems. This is probably to be expected given that some of these tasks place greater demands on NSMP schools than on those using the other systems.

Table VI-29: Extent to Which Public NSLP School Districts have Experienced Difficulty in Performing Tasks Associated with Implementation of the School Meals Initiative, by Size of District, SY 1998/99

Tasks	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 - 4,999			5,000 - 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty
	(percent)														
Documenting last-minute substitutions	6.1	50.2	43.6	7.4	53.5	39.1	12.0	52.5	35.4	9.5	43.1	47.4	7.4	51.6	40.9
Substituting nutritionally-comparable foods	4.5	49.6	45.9	5.9	56.7	37.5	11.2	55.8	33.0	4.3	55.6	40.1	5.9	53.5	40.6
Defining a reimbursable meal	1.0	14.1	84.9	2.6	15.2	82.3	3.3	18.6	78.0	1.3	20.7	78.0	2.0	15.1	82.9
Implementing offer vs. serve	4.5	9.2	86.3	2.4	11.5	86.1	2.9	15.2	81.9	0.9	14.7	84.1	3.3	11.0	85.7
Serving planned portions	2.2	17.9	79.9	2.1	19.7	78.2	2.0	24.5	73.5	2.2	21.1	76.7	2.1	19.5	78.4
Moving students through the line	3.1	21.8	75.1	3.7	29.7	66.6	6.1	34.7	59.1	3.0	29.7	67.2	3.7	26.8	69.5
Adhering to standardized recipes	4.3	46.5	49.2	7.5	55.6	37.0	11.5	54.8	33.7	9.9	43.5	46.6	6.7	51.6	41.8
Maintaining food production records	9.1	30.7	60.1	8.1	38.0	53.9	12.2	41.2	46.7	7.8	36.2	55.6	9.0	35.1	55.9
Separating a la carte and reimbursable sales	2.5	7.1	90.4	3.3	16.4	80.3	4.1	23.0	72.8	4.3	17.7	78.0	3.0	13.2	83.7
Obtaining production information for self-serve bars	4.2	10.1	85.7	8.9	24.2	66.9	12.7	26.9	60.3	7.3	23.3	69.4	7.3	18.5	74.2

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

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Table VI-30: Extent to Which Public NSLP School Districts have Experienced Difficulty in Performing Tasks Associated with Implementation of the School Meals Initiative, by Type of Menu Planning System, SY 1998/99

Tasks	Menu Planning System														
	NSMP			ANSMP			Enhanced Food-Based			Traditional Food-based			Other		
	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty
	(percent)														
Documenting last-minute substitutions	11.7	60.1	28.2	7.4	55.8	37.0	7.7	48.4	43.9	6.2	50.4	43.3	3.8	51.7	44.4
Substituting nutritionally-comparable foods	9.5	60.7	29.8	2.9	59.1	37.9	5.1	53.5	41.4	5.7	51.3	43.0	1.7	47.9	50.0
Defining a reimbursable meal	3.3	23.5	73.2	2.5	17.2	80.6	1.6	14.5	83.9	1.7	13.1	85.3	0.0	9.0	91.0
Implementing offer vs. serve	3.6	16.9	79.4	1.8	11.5	86.9	3.1	11.1	85.8	3.4	9.2	87.5	0.0	5.1	94.9
Serving planned portions	3.2	28.0	68.8	0.0	21.7	78.3	2.9	20.1	77.0	1.4	16.5	82.2	0.0	13.2	86.8
Moving students through the line	3.5	30.0	66.5	5.0	21.2	73.8	4.0	29.8	66.2	3.3	24.7	72.0	3.8	20.9	75.2
Adhering to standardized recipes	9.5	58.3	32.1	10.8	47.4	41.8	5.2	53.8	41.0	6.9	48.2	44.9	0.0	61.5	38.0
Maintaining food production records	9.5	40.5	50.1	7.4	32.1	60.5	9.0	37.6	53.4	9.0	31.7	59.3	1.3	19.7	79.1
Separating *a la carte* and reimbursable sales	4.5	18.1	77.5	5.0	3.8	91.2	4.1	14.0	81.9	1.9	12.3	85.7	1.3	4.7	94.0
Obtaining production information for self-serve bars	12.0	23.8	64.2	6.5	2.9	90.7	8.1	21.3	70.5	5.4	15.7	78.8	1.3	13.2	85.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Program Acceptance

The attitudes of the principal stakeholders in the school food program toward the SMI offer a useful barometer of the initiative's success. A number of stakeholders are involved, including school food directors, administrative staff, financial staff, kitchen managers, cooks, cashiers, students, and parents. If the objectives of the SMI are to be achieved, a large share of each of these stakeholder groups must effectively "buy-in" to the program and how it is being implemented.

To assess the reaction of each of the stakeholder groups to the SMI, school food directors were asked to assess the attitude of each using a five-point scale that extended from "very positive" to "very negative." If the description of stakeholder did not apply, respondents were asked to indicate "not applicable." The same question was asked in the first year survey.

In most school districts, stakeholder views are seen as neutral to positive by the school food director, with some variation among stakeholder groups. In three-quarters or more of the districts, all seven stakeholders are judged to be neutral to positive. This assessment is generally unchanged from the year before.

To the extent there has been an observable change between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99, it is in the somewhat less positive attitude of some of the stakeholders. In particular, a smaller share of administrative and financial staff and cooks are seen as being "very positive" or "somewhat positive" while a larger share are viewed as "neutral" in their attitude toward the SMI. While this implies a slightly less enthusiastic reception for the SMI reforms, the good news is that the share viewed as "somewhat negative" or "very negative" remains small at less than 12%, on average.

In Table VI-32, the attitudes of two of the stakeholder groups most directly affected by the SMI, cooks and students, are compared by the menu planning system used in their districts. As a group, cooks are somewhat more divided in their attitude toward the SMI. On the one hand, over half of all districts (56.7%) report that their cooks are either "very positive" or "somewhat positive" in attitude. At the same time, 22.7% of all districts see their cooks as "somewhat negative" or "very negative" toward the program, a substantially larger share than any other stakeholder group. It would appear that cooks are seldom neutral, at least in their attitude toward the SMI, as seen by the school food director. Furthermore, the share of districts reporting a negative attitude on the part of their cooks toward the initiative between SY 1997/98 and SY 1998/99 rose from 18.8% to 22.7%. As can be seen in Table VI-32, much of this increase occurred in districts using NSMP or ANSMP, though some took place in districts using food-based menu planning districts too.

Student attitude toward the SMI does not vary much among districts using different menu planning systems. For the most part, students are seen as being neutral to positive in their feelings about the SMI with around 80% or more of all districts describing student attitude in this way. There is some indication in these numbers, however, that students in NSMP districts are seen as having become slightly more negative as compared to students in districts with other menu planning systems. Comparatively little change in attitude is apparent among students in districts with food-based systems.

Asked for their personal opinion of the SMI, most school food directors remain highly supportive. Of the total, 67.7% say that they are "very positive" or "somewhat positive." This remains the highest share for any stakeholder group. Among directors in districts of 25,000 or more students and in high poverty districts, the share holding a positive attitude is even higher at 75.1% and 73.3%, respectively. A slightly higher share of directors from NSMP districts (72%) have a positive view of the SMI, as well, though the magnitude of difference from districts with other menu planning systems generally fell between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99.

The most pronounced change to have occurred over the period was among school food directors in ANSMP districts. Although 63.9% of these directors continued to have a positive opinion of the SMI, this share was down from 79.1% the year before while those with a negative opinion rose from 14.3% to 20.3%. A slightly higher share of both cooks and students in the ANSMP districts were reported by the directors in these districts to have a negative attitude toward the program.

Table VI-31: Attitude of Public NSLP School District Stakeholders Toward the School Meals Initiative, as Reported by School Food Director, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Stakeholder	Very positive		Somewhat positive		Neutral		Somewhat negative		Very negative		Not applicable	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)											
Administrative staff	27.7	21.2	32.2	25.2	28.3	40.8	5.4	6.6	1.2	1.3	5.1	5.0
Financial staff	19.3	15.3	20.7	14.7	39.1	51.0	7.7	5.9	1.8	1.1	11.4	12.0
Kitchen managers	27.1	20.9	37.0	40.9	15.3	18.7	13.5	12.0	2.4	2.4	4.7	5.2
Cooks	22.3	17.5	36.9	39.2	19.2	18.1	16.1	19.4	2.7	3.3	2.8	2.4
Cashiers	17.3	12.2	23.2	17.7	37.9	48.4	7.1	7.7	1.9	1.3	12.7	12.7
Students	12.5	11.1	30.4	27.1	39.2	45.4	12.2	11.1	2.9	3.2	2.8	2.1
Parents	14.5	11.2	29.1	25.0	44.4	51.4	4.6	5.6	1.1	1.1	6.4	5.6

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-32: Attitude of Public NSLP School District Cooks and Students Toward the School Meals Initiative, as Reported by School Food Director, by Menu Planning System Used, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Stakeholder	Very positive		Somewhat positive		Neutral		Somewhat negative		Very negative		Not applicable	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)											
Cooks												
NSMP	22.2	14.1	40.9	40.7	17.1	17.5	14.9	23.2	2.4	3.0	2.5	1.5
ANSMP	30.2	16.4	28.4	35.8	15.0	11.9	17.9	20.0	6.5	14.6	1.9	1.1
Enhanced food-based	24.3	16.0	33.6	41.6	19.5	17.3	17.8	21.7	3.0	2.1	1.9	1.4
Traditional food-based	20.4	19.7	37.5	38.5	20.8	18.5	15.5	16.9	2.6	3.1	3.2	3.3
Other	25.4	11.1	36.4	36.8	10.3	31.2	21.7	14.1	0.6	3.8	5.6	3.0
Students												
NSMP	15.0	9.0	30.8	24.3	37.0	47.0	11.7	16.4	2.9	1.2	2.5	2.0
ANSMP	9.8	21.4	41.3	23.0	29.8	32.2	9.5	11.5	9.7	11.9	0.0	0.0
Enhanced food-based	13.5	9.8	31.5	31.1	38.9	47.1	13.0	9.5	1.5	2.2	1.5	0.3
Traditional food-based	11.6	12.1	28.7	26.0	40.1	45.2	12.7	10.0	3.1	3.6	3.8	3.0
Other	15.9	12.8	23.9	9.8	59.5	63.7	0.0	6.8	0.6	3.8	0.0	3.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VI-33: Opinion of the School Food Director of Public NSLP School Districts Toward the School Meals Initiative by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1997/98 and 1998/99

District characteristics	Very positive		Somewhat positive		Neutral		Somewhat negative		Very negative		Not applicable	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)											
All districts	28.5	27.4	40.9	40.3	12.4	14.6	10.9	9.9	2.0	3.2	5.3	4.7
District size[1/]												
Less than 1,000	29.9	29.3	39.2	38.1	13.9	15.3	9.5	8.4	1.4	2.8	6.2	6.0
1,000 – 4,999	28.0	27.1	42.5	40.0	11.7	15.0	11.1	11.1	2.2	3.4	4.6	3.3
5,000 – 24,999	25.0	22.3	41.8	46.2	9.7	12.0	15.3	11.3	3.3	4.3	4.9	3.8
25,000 or more	33.3	30.5	37.9	44.6	13.3	11.6	6.7	9.0	4.2	1.3	4.6	3.0
Program participation												
NSLP and SBP	31.0	28.1	40.6	41.2	10.6	13.7	10.7	9.0	2.1	2.9	5.1	5.0
NSLP only	21.1	24.0	41.9	39.7	17.9	17.4	11.3	12.2	1.9	3.8	6.0	2.9
District poverty level[2/]												
High (>60% f&r)	39.1	38.0	39.7	35.3	8.0	14.2	7.4	7.5	1.9	0.7	3.9	4.3
Medium (31-60% f&r)	28.9	26.9	41.1	42.2	11.4	13.6	10.3	10.1	2.6	3.3	5.9	4.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	24.6	23.9	41.1	40.3	14.8	15.8	12.6	10.9	1.7	4.0	5.3	5.1
Menu Planning method used												
NSMP	34.5	31.0	43.8	42.0	6.9	11.8	9.0	10.0	2.2	2.3	3.6	3.0
ANSMP	27.5	31.2	51.6	32.7	5.8	9.0	12.0	10.8	2.3	9.5	0.8	6.8
Enhanced food-based	28.4	26.9	38.7	41.2	15.2	10.8	10.9	13.1	1.7	2.4	5.2	5.6
Traditional food-based	26.3	26.4	41.2	38.7	13.4	18.1	11.5	8.3	2.0	3.4	5.6	5.1
Other	30.8	26.5	35.9	42.3	5.0	17.5	0.9	0.0	4.2	0.9	23.3	12.8

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

CHAPTER VII:
SELECTED OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Introduction

While the principal focus of this study is the School Meals Initiative and its implementation status, other issues of current interest to FNS have also been examined. The national surveys that are used to collect information about the SMI provide a convenient and efficient means of collecting information on other related topics as well.

In this chapter, we assess findings related to eight operational issues of special interest to program administrators and policymakers. The issues are: practices of SFAs managed by food service management companies, access and use of the Internet, Provisions I, II, and III schools, direct certification of free meal eligibility, afterschool care programs, charter schools, meal counting systems, and the donation of school food leftovers.

Research Questions

In assessing these issues, the following research questions are addressed:

- How many school districts are using food service management companies (FSMCs) and to what extent did the number change between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99? Are there differences in the use of FSMCs by district characteristics?
- For those school districts that contract with a FSMC:
  - Is the Food Service Director employed by the FSMC or by the district?
  - Of selected food service functions, which ones are performed by the FSMC, by the district, or jointly?
  - On what basis is the FSMC fee determined? When these fees are computed on a per-meal basis, are a la carte and snack foods included and, if so, how are they converted to a meal equivalent basis?
  - Who at the school district is responsible for monitoring FSMC performance?
  - Does the school district periodically verify the accuracy of the meal count claimed by the FSMC?
- How many school food directors have access to the Internet, at work or at home, and with what frequency is it used?
- How many school districts are operating schools under the special assistance alternatives (Provisions I, II, and III) to the normal requirements for annual

eligibility determinations and daily meal counts and for those districts that are, how many schools are participating?

- How many SFAs use direct certification of children in Food Stamp, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations households to qualify for free meal eligibility?
- For those SFAs that use direct certification with information provided by the State:
  - Does the State contact the qualifying households directly or do they send the SFA a list for use in certifying students?
  - When the SFA receives a list of eligible students from the State, does the SFA send a letter of notification to the household and if it does, are households required to return the letter to become certified?

- In how many school districts are afterschool care programs being held? For those school districts providing afterschool care:
  - How many schools are providing this care?
  - Who are the principal sponsors?
  - How many children participate in these programs?
  - To what extent is food served to participants in these programs and for those that provide food, are they snacks or meals, who is responsible for food preparation, and do they receive Federal reimbursement for the food service?

- How many school districts have "charter schools" operating within their systems? For those that do, who administers their food service programs?
- What types of meal counting systems are being used by school districts to determine the number of reimbursable meals that are served each day.
- How many school districts have someone at the point of service check each child to determine that the food they have taken qualifies as a reimbursable meal? And if someone checks, what action do they take when the food items do not qualify as a reimbursable meal?
- How many school districts review their meal counts to ensure their accuracy and how often are these reviews conducted?
- How many school districts donate leftover food to charitable institutions and with what frequency?

Use of Food Service Management Companies

Some school districts contract with Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs) to manage their food service programs. The share of all districts entering into contracts with FSMCs has gradually risen over the past two decades. While contracts with FSMCs are entered into at the discretion of the district, this action does not absolve the district of its responsibility for the overall operation of the school nutrition programs, including the NSLP and the SBP.

To ensure that school districts contracting with FSMCs remain in compliance with Federal child nutrition regulations, they must meet certain requirements. If they have contracted the services of an FSMC, SFAs are required to:

- retain control of school food service accounts, contractual agreements, and overall financial responsibility
- establish the price levels of school meals
- determine eligibility for free and reduced price meals
- retain title to USDA donated foods, and
- complete all reports required of SFAs.

Given the growing prominence of FSMCs in school feeding programs, FNS is interested in knowing more about how these contracts are being administered and how SFAs are fulfilling their responsibilities under Federal regulations.

The share of districts contracting with FSMCs rose to 13.8% in SY 1998/99, up from 11.8% the year before. While proportionately more mid-sized districts use FSMCs than do districts at either size extreme, the number of small districts using these companies grew sharply in SY 1998/99. The share of all districts of less than 1,000 operated by FSMC's rose from 5.9% to 9.5%. Although the number (and share) of FSMC districts in the largest size category is estimated to have retreated somewhat in SY 1998/99, the small number of observations does not provide a sound basis for drawing inferences.

Interestingly, the year two survey results suggest that much of the growth in FSMC districts between SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99 occurred in high and medium poverty districts. While FSMC districts still account for a proportionately smaller share of the total number in these poverty categories (11.1% and 10.2%, respectively), they are gaining in share relative to the share of low poverty districts that are using FSMCs.

Table VII-1: Number of Public NSLP School Districts Utilizing the Services of a Food Service Management Company by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

	1997/98		1998/99	
District characteristics	Number of districts using FSMCs	Districts using FSMCs as percent of total	Number of districts using FSMCs	Districts using FSMCs as percent of total
All districts	1,588	11.8	1,810	13.8
District size[1]				
Less than 1,000	342	5.9	522	9.5
1,000 – 4,999	919	16.3	1,000	17.7
5,000 – 24,999	303	16.7	247	15.1
25,000 or more	24	10.0	16	6.9
Program participation				
NSLP and SBP	1,041	10.3	1,113	11.9
NSLP only	547	16.1	578	18.4
District poverty level[2]				
High (>60% f&r)	126	6.0	250	11.1
Medium (31-60% f&r)	404	7.7	491	10.2
Low (≤30% f&r)	1,058	17.2	1,044	17.6

[1] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

School food directors in FSMC districts responding to the survey were asked who they were employed by. Overall, just over three-quarters (75.5%) reported that they were employed by the FSMC. Except for the smallest districts (less than 1,000) where 41% reported that they were employed by the school district, around three-quarters of all directors, regardless of district size, program mix, or poverty level, indicated that they were employees of the FSMC.

Table VII-2: Share of School Food Directors in Public NSLP School Districts Operating Under the Direction of Food Service Management Companies, by Type of Employer and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	School Food Director employed by:			
	Food service management company	School district	Consulting firm	Other
	------------------------(percent)------------------------			
All districts	75.5	22.9	1.7	0.0
District size[1]				
Less than 1,000	59.0	41.0	0.0	0.0
1,000 – 4,999	81.8	16.4	1.8	0.0
5,000 – 24,999	82.2	13.8	4.0	0.0
25,000 or more	73.3	13.3	13.3	0.0
Program participation				
NSLP and SBP	73.4	25.4	1.3	0.0
NSLP only	75.4	21.8	2.8	0.0
District poverty level[2]				
High (>60% f&r)	74.3	25.7	0.0	0.0
Medium (31-60% f&r)	71.5	26.1	2.4	0.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	77.1	21.2	1.7	0.0

[1] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

There are many functions to be performed in administering and operating a school food program. Accordingly, FSMCs can play different roles depending on which functions they are contracted to perform. To gain a better understanding of the roles these companies are playing, survey respondents were asked to indicated for each of several common food service functions whether it was performed by the school district, by the FSMC, or jointly by both.

As indicated in Table VII-3, 75% to 85% of all districts that contract with FSMCs look to them to plan and prepare menus and to select and buy food. A slightly smaller share (though still a strong majority), depend on the FSMC they contract with to select the vendors, order donated commodities, and prepare and serve meals, including a la carte service. A strong minority of all districts (23% to 30%) retain control over the preparation and serving of meals. Responsibility for administrative and support tasks, like preparing reimbursement claims and selling lunch tickets, is more evenly divided with districts performing the function in about one-third of the cases, FSMCs in another one-third, and a combination of the two in the remaining one-third.

Table VII-3: Share of Public NSLP School Districts Using Food Service Management Companies for which Selected Food Service Functions are Performed, by Organization Performing the Function, SY 1998/99

	Function performed by:			
Food Service Function	School district	Food service management company	Both	Not applicable
	------------------------(percent)------------------------			
Preparing reimbursement claims	41.5	34.8	23.8	0.0
Accounting and financial record keeping	33.3	29.8	36.9	0.0
Planning Menus	7.1	85.4	7.6	0.0
Preparing Menus	12.8	80.1	7.1	0.0
Preparing reimbursable breakfasts	19.2	46.8	5.1	29.0
Serving reimbursable breakfasts	20.9	44.6	4.8	29.7
Preparing reimbursable lunches	23.0	68.5	8.1	0.3
Serving reimbursable lunches	27.1	64.7	7.8	0.3
Providing *a la carte* service	15.9	62.0	8.1	13.9
Purchasing equipment for food preparation	38.9	17.0	42.0	2.1
Cafeteria clean-up	39.0	31.6	28.4	1.0
Food purchases including:				
vendor selection	10.9	69.2	14.1	5.7
food selection	11.1	78.9	10.0	0.0
determining quantities ordered	14.8	74.7	10.5	0.0
Ordering donated commodities	12.2	68.4	18.2	1.1
Selling lunch tickets and collecting money	37.5	43.6	18.2	0.8

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Federal regulations permit school districts to use two types of payment or fee structures (or combinations of structures) in their contracts with FSMCs. They are:

- **Fixed-price**. Under this approach, the fee is assessed on a per-meal or per-time period (e.g. per year) basis.

- **Cost-reimbursable**. Under this approach, the FSMC passes food service operating costs through to the district and adds an additional flat fee to cover management and administrative costs.

School food directors were asked which approach or combination of approaches was used in their contracts with FSMCs. Across all FSMC districts, nearly half (49.1%) determine the fee on a per-meal basis followed by 29.3% that pay a flat administrative fee and another 18.4% that use a combination of the two.

There are some differences in approach among districts. Most notably, larger districts (enrollment of 5,000 or more) and high and medium poverty districts are somewhat less likely to rely exclusively on a flat administrative fee. Instead, these districts are more likely to use a per-meal fee or a combination of flat and per-meal fees.

Alternative approaches to fee determination, including the use of percent of sales, are rarely used.

For those districts that contract to pay FSMCs on a per meal basis and also provide a la carte food service, it is necessary to convert a la carte sales to a meal equivalency. In its published guidance to SFAs, the USDA identifies two methods of calculating this:[1]

1) By dividing the total cost of producing a la carte items sold by the unit cost of producing a reimbursable lunch.
2) By dividing a la carte revenue by the per meal sum of the Federal and State free reimbursement plus the value of USDA entitlement and bonus donated foods.

Of the approximately 1,800 school districts contracting with FSMCs in SY 1998/99, nearly half (48.5%) report that they convert a la carte and snackfood sales to a meal-equivalency basis. Of this number, around two-thirds (64%) calculate meal-equivalency on the basis of a pre-determined amount. Another quarter (24.7%) make the calculation by dividing a la carte and snackfood sales by the price of a full-price lunch.

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[1] USDA, FCS, *Contracting with Food Service 4.7%) Management Companies: Guidance for School Food Authorities*, June 1995.

Table VII-4: Share of Public NSLP School Districts Using Food Service Management Companies by Basis on which Management Fee Determined, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	Basis for management fee					Number of districts
	Flat administrative fee	Per-meal fee	Combination administrative and per-meal	Percent of sales	Other	
	---------------------	----------	(percent)	----------	---------------------	(number)
All districts	29.3	49.1	18.4	0.6	2.7	1810
District size[1]						
Less than 1,000	21.6	61.1	9.0	0.0	8.2	522
1,000 – 4,999	36.1	42.5	19.8	1.0	0.5	1001
5,000 – 24,999	16.6	49.4	32.8	0.0	0.0	246
25,000 or more	0.0	50.6	50.0	0.0	0.0	16
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	22.8	48.6	24.3	0.0	4.3	1113
NSLP only	36.4	52.3	9.5	1.7	0.0	577
District poverty level[2]						
High (>60% f&r)	8.8	60.0	28.8	0.0	2.4	250
Medium (31-60% f&r)	14.2	61.1	16.6	0.0	8.2	491
Low (≤30% f&r)	40.0	41.5	17.0	1.0	0.5	1044

[1] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

The most notable deviation from this overall pattern occurs among high poverty districts. A substantially smaller share of these districts uses the full-price lunch as a basis for the calculation. Results from the survey conducted in year one of this study indicated that school districts in high poverty areas charged significantly lower prices for full-price lunches in both elementary and middle/secondary schools.[1] All other things equal, lower meal prices would result in a larger number of meal equivalents and, in turn, a larger FSMC fee.

To help ensure that FSMCs comply with applicable Federal, State, and local rules and regulations, school districts entering into contracts with FSMCs are required to monitor several aspects of the food service operation. This includes responsibility for monitoring and evaluating:

- reimbursement claims
- meal count records
- cost and revenue records
- use of USDA donated foods
- adherence to meal pattern and cycle menu requirements

In carrying-out this responsibility, districts are charged with conducting periodic on-site visits and maintaining documentation of their monitoring activities and any corrective actions that might be required.

School food directors were asked two questions regarding their district's monitoring activities. They were asked to identify who in the district monitors FSMC performance. They were also asked if the district periodically performs an independent check on the accuracy of the meal count calculated by the FSMC. As indicated in Table VII-6, most districts provided multiple responses to the question regarding who monitors FSMC performance. Across all districts, district business managers were cited with greatest frequency (70.5%), followed by the district superintendent (56.6%). School principals and school boards participate in monitoring in one-third or more of all districts.

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[1] USDA, FNS *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, 1999, pp III-13.

Table VII-5: Number of Public NSLP School Districts that Convert A la Carte and Snack Food Sales to a Meal-Equivalent Basis When Food Service Management Company Fees Are Computed on a Per-Meal Basis, by Basis of Calculations and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District Characteristics	All FSMC districts that convert	Sales divided by paid lunch price		Pre-determined amount		Other	
	Number	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All districts	877	217	24.7	561	64.0	99	11.3
District size[1/]							
Less than 1,000	160	35	22.0	105	66.0	19	11.9
1,000 – 4,999	507	142	28.0	324	63.9	41	8.1
5,000 – 24,999	194	37	19.1	121	62.4	36	18.6
25,000 or more	16	2	13.3	11	73.3	2	13.3
Program participation							
NSLP and SBP	601	137	22.8	401	66.7	63	10.5
NSLP only	244	64	26.2	144	59.0	36	14.8
District poverty level[2/]							
High (>60% f&r)	123	6	4.9	102	82.9	15	12.2
Medium (31-60% f&r)	292	106	36.3	150	51.4	36	12.3
Low (≤30% f&r)	461	105	22.8	308	66.8	48	10.4

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Since the smallest school districts (less than 1,000) are less likely to have the services of a business manager, they are relatively more dependent on superintendents to monitor FSMC performance. In high poverty districts, school boards are used less than half as frequently as the average across all districts (15.6% versus 39.5%). Superintendents are involved somewhat less frequently in these districts as well.

In response to asking school food directors if their districts perform an independent check of meal counts, a majority (72.4%) reported that they conduct such checks. Smaller districts (less than 5,000 enrollment) and both high and low-poverty districts were slightly less likely to perform these checks. Given the requirement in FNS regulations that districts maintain overall control of food service accounts and that they monitor meal count records in particular, this share is surprisingly low.

Internet Access

Computers are now widely used in school food programs. Nearly 80% of the food service operations in public school districts used computers in some capacity in SY 1997/98.[1] There has been a virtual explosion in the use of computers in American households over the past decade. At the end of 1998, over 40% of US households owned a computer and one-quarter had access to the Internet.[2] Using computers to access the Internet opens new opportunities for faster, more efficient communication and transfer of information.

The USDA maintains or supports a number of web sites on the Internet related to child nutrition programs and to the SMI. A vast array of information is available through these web sites ranging from free and reduced price application materials and program regulations, to training materials and technical assistance tailored to individual needs. To help determine the accessibility of school food authorities to this wealth of information, school food directors were asked if they had access to the Internet and, if they did, from what locations and with what frequency they accessed it. They were also asked if they had visited particular web sites maintained or supported by the USDA. Their responses are summarized in Tables VII-7 and VII-8.

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[1] Ibil, p. III-20.

[2] US Department of Commerce, *Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide*, July 8, 1999

Table VII-6: Share of Public NSLP School Districts Using Food Service Management Companies, by who Monitors Performance of the Food Service Management Company and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	Food service management company performance monitored by:						District performs independent meal count check
	School district business manager	Superintendent	School Principal	School board	Someone else	Not monitored	
	---(percent of food service management districts)---						
All districts	70.5	56.6	33.7	39.5	11.6	0.0	72.4
District size[1/]							
Less than 1,000	47.9	60.5	24.1	25.3	11.7	0.0	70.1
1,000 – 4,999	79.6	57.5	38.7	44.8	10.5	0.0	70.9
5,000 – 24,999	83.0	45.7	34.4	44.9	17.0	0.0	83.8
25,000 or more	68.8	43.8	37.5	43.8	12.5	0.0	87.5
Program participation							
NSLP and SBP	70.4	61.6	36.0	43.0	13.0	0.0	70.4
NSLP only	79.2	51.2	28.9	31.7	7.6	0.0	73.4
District poverty level[2/]							
High (>60% f&r)	73.2	42.0	27.2	15.6	13.2	0.0	68.8
Medium (31-60% f&r)	55.0	50.3	22.2	37.5	12.4	0.0	85.3
Low (≤30% f&r)	77.4	63.0	40.8	45.5	11.2	0.0	67.5

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

About two-thirds (67%) of all school food directors reported having direct access to the Internet from some location. Among those with access to the Internet, their most frequent point of access is at the office (82.7%), followed by 44.8% who access the Internet at home and 25.7% who use library facilities to gain access. The share of directors with access to the Internet, both at the office and at home, is positively associated with district size. This relationship is especially pronounced for access at home, with the share of directors from the largest districts (68.4%) more than twice the share of directors from the smallest districts (32.3%). This relationship (as well as the reduced frequency of use among directors in smaller districts) could be due, at least in part, to the higher cost of Internet access in more isolated locations. Access to the Internet through libraries, in contrast, declines as district size increases. This is to be expected since directors in larger districts appear to have greater access through computers at work or at home.

The majority of those food service directors who use the Internet report that they use it on average 1 or 2 times per week. On average, fewer than 20% of those school food directors who use the Internet report using it more than five times per week.

Of those directors with access to the Internet, fewer than half report having ever visited any of the major child nutrition web sites maintained or supported by the USDA. Of the seven web sites identified in the survey, the FNS site ranked at the top with 40.9% of all Internet using directors indicating that they had visited it at least once. This was followed by the web sites for Team Nutrition (30.5%), the Food and Nutrition Information Center (24.3%), and the National Food Service Management Institute (21.1%).

For most web sites, the share of those directors with access to the Internet who have visited the site is substantially higher among the larger districts. For example, the share of directors from the largest districts was approximately double the share from the smallest districts that visited the FNS, Team Nutrition, and Food and Nutrition Information Center web sites. And for the National Food Service Management Institute, the share of directors from the largest districts was over four times the share from the smallest districts.

Table VII-7: Share of School Food Directors in Public NSLP School Districts Who Have Access to the Internet, by Location and Frequency of Use and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	Share of all directors	Location of Internet access:				Frequency of Internet use per week:			
		Office	Home	Library	Other	1 – 2	3 – 5	6 – 10	> 10
	(percent)	-------------------------------(percent of Internet users)---------------------------------							
All districts	67.0	82.7	44.8	25.7	5.7	62.3	19.7	8.5	9.4
District size[1]									
Less than 1,000	58.8	70.5	32.2	35.1	11.6	71.3	14.3	6.2	8.2
1,000 – 4,999	68.4	88.6	49.0	22.1	2.3	59.6	23.0	8.4	9.0
5,000 – 24,999	86.9	91.9	58.4	16.8	2.2	50.7	23.2	12.7	13.5
25,000 or more	90.1	96.2	68.4	14.4	3.3	45.9	24.9	17.2	12.0
Program participation									
NSLP and SBP	70.7	84.6	44.4	25.6	4.6	59.7	21.3	8.3	10.8
NSLP only	56.9	74.8	49.1	24.3	10.1	65.5	17.2	10.7	6.5
District poverty level[2]									
High (>60% f&r)	66.9	75.8	41.0	30.6	11.1	67.8	14.2	8.3	9.7
Medium (31-60% f&r)	69.2	83.8	44.3	26.5	4.3	60.5	20.3	9.0	10.2
Low (≤30% f&r)	65.3	84.2	46.6	23.5	4.9	61.4	21.7	8.1	8.8

[1] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VII-8: Share of Public NSLP School Food Directors Who Have Visited Internet Web Sites Maintained and/or Supported by the USDA, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	Websites:							
	Food and Nutrition Service	Team Nutrition	Food and Nutrition Information Center	Nutrient Data Laboratory	Food Surveys Research Group	Center for Nutrition Policy	National Food Service Management Institute	Number of school food directors with Internet access
	(percent)							
All districts	40.9	30.5	24.3	6.3	5.9	7.8	21.1	8,788
District size[1]								
Less than 1,000	31.9	23.7	17.7	3.6	7.0	8.0	11.5	3,247
1,000 – 4,999	41.1	30.9	24.8	7.1	4.2	6.7	21.9	3,854
5,000 – 24,999	57.5	41.7	37.5	10.1	8.0	10.1	37.8	1,420
25,000 or more	62.2	45.5	34.4	11.0	6.2	11.5	48.3	209
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	42.2	31.6	25.5	6.8	6.1	7.8	22.9	6,628
NSLP only	33.7	20.4	22.0	5.6	3.4	6.8	15.8	1,787
District poverty level[2]								
High (>60% f&r)	38.1	32.3	26.9	7.7	6.7	10.9	22.3	1,511
Medium (31-60% f&r)	43.0	31.6	26.8	7.3	7.3	7.6	25.5	3,338
Low (≤30% f&r)	40.1	28.5	21.6	5.1	4.4	6.9	17.2	3,881

[1] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Provision 1, 2, and 3 schools

To help schools reduce the paperwork that is required to annually determine student eligibility for free and reduced-price meals, Congress authorized three alternative approaches. They are commonly referred to as the Provision 1, 2, and 3 alternatives. In brief, they operate as follows:

- **Provision 1**. In schools where at least 80% of the enrolled students are eligible for free or reduced price meals, certification of children eligible for free meals may be reduced to every other year. These schools must continue to record daily meal counts by type of meal.
- **Provision 2**. Under this option, schools take free and reduced-price applications and counts of meals served by type, i.e., free, reduced-price and full-price, during a base year. Reimbursements to the school for the following three years are based on the share of free, reduced, and full-price meals in the base year applied to a current count of reimbursable meals served. No further eligibility determinations are required for the four year period. All meals are served at no charge to the student.
- **Provision 3**. This alternative is similar to Provision 2 except that schools receive the same level of cash and commodity support they received in the base year, adjusted only for changes in enrollment and inflation. As a result, they are not required to maintain meal counts after the base year. As under Provision 2, all children eat free.

Any additional cost that results from providing free meals to all children, as required under Provisions 2 and 3, is the responsibility of the school district. Limited Federal funding is available for two years in the form of grants to States for use in identifying schools that might benefit from these Provisions and helping them evaluate the costs and benefits of adopting them.

In SY 1998/99, an estimated 4,440 schools in 810 school districts were operating under one of the three alternatives. This represents 5.5% of the total number of schools and 6.2% of all public NSLP school districts. Nearly one-quarter (24.1%) of all districts with an enrollment of 25,000 or more had schools that were operating under one of the options. Of the high poverty districts, 18% had schools that were using one of the three approaches.

As indicated in Table VII-9, Provisions 1 and 2 are more widely used than Provision 3. Both approaches are used with somewhat greater frequency in elementary schools (6.4% in combination) than in middle/secondary schools (3.9% in combination). Use of Provisions 1 and 2 tends to occur with greatest frequency in the larger districts, particularly elementary schools. As expected, use of all three options is greatest in high poverty districts and their use is negligible in low poverty districts. It is noted that the poverty measure used here is determined on a district-wide basis while the decision to apply these options is generally made at the level of the individual school. This largely explains the presence of Provision 1, 2, and 3 schools in medium and low poverty districts.

Direct Certification

The procedures required to establish student eligibility for free and reduced price meals can be administratively demanding. Certifying eligibility requires that SFAs collect, process, and verify applications, notify eligible applicants, establish a hearing procedure for appeals, and develop an annual reduced-price policy statement detailing the SFA's policies and procedures in administering the relevant FNS regulations.

To ease the administrative burden of this process, FNS developed an alternative method of establishing a child's eligibility for free (but not reduced-price) meals. This simpler method is called "direct certification." Under direct certification, the SFA and/or the SA (on behalf of the SFA) obtains documentation from the appropriate State or local agency that enables the SFA to identify children in households currently certified to receive assistance through the Food Stamp (FS) program, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Children in households receiving these benefits are automatically eligible for free meals under the NSLP and the SBP.

This determination can be made either through a State operated system or, in the absence of a State-wide system, by individual SFAs working with the appropriate local agencies. Once the qualifying children have been identified, notification is generally made in one of two ways. Either (1) the child's household is notified by the State agency and provided with documentation for presentation to local school authorities or (2) the SFA is notified directly by the State agency.

The advantages of direct certification are obvious. Since many of the children qualifying for free meals live in households that qualify for FS, TANF, and/or FDPIR, their eligibility has already been determined. Using this information allows SFAs and SAs to avoid any unnecessary duplication of effort.

Table VII-9: Share of Public NSLP Schools Operating Provisions I, II, III, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	Districts with I, II, and III schools		Provision I			Provision II			Provision III			All schools		
			Elem	Mid/Sec	Other	Elem	Mid/Sec	Other	Elem	Mid/Sec	Other	Elem	Mid/Sec	Other
	(number)	(percent)	-----------(percent)-----------									------(number)------		
All	810	6.2	2.2	1.6	2.6	3.6	1.9	1.8	0.6	0.4	0.5	48,698	26,067	6,081
District size[1/]														
Less than 1,000	352	6.4	2.4	1.2	1.8	2.0	2.8	3.1	0.3	0.4	0.5	4,664	3,272	1,780
1,000 – 4,999	273	4.8	1.6	1.7	2.3	1.0	0.9	0.3	0.8	0.5	1.0	15,133	9,767	1,936
5,000 – 24,999	124	7.6	1.2	0.5	2.1	4.8	2.8	2.8	0.2	0.1	0.0	16,506	7,619	1,195
25,000 or more	56	24.1	3.9	2.9	4.6	5.9	1.8	1.6	1.0	0.6	0.0	12,395	5,409	1,171
Program participation														
NSLP and SBP	611	6.5	2.6	2.0	4.3	4.3	2.4	3.2	0.7	0.5	0.6	37,437	18,188	3,447
NSLP only	142	4.5	0.4	0.2	0.0	2.1	0.6	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.7	6,493	3,730	1,198
District poverty level[2/]														
High (>60% f&r)	407	18.0	4.6	3.6	6.7	12.7	8.2	3.9	1.9	1.1	0.8	10,546	4,760	1,579
Medium (31-60% f&r)	222	4.6	2.6	1.6	1.6	2.0	0.7	1.9	0.2	0.1	0.3	18,783	10,462	2,596
Low (≤30% f&r)	176	3.0	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.4	19,369	10,846	1,906

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Nationwide, an estimated 70.8% of all districts make use of direct certification. A somewhat larger share of the largest districts (89.2%) use this approach to determine eligibility. In most instances, this is accomplished through State operated systems. Of those districts using direct certification, 84.4% reported using a State system. Most of the remaining districts (11.4%) didn't know if it was a State system. On the basis of the more complete responses of the larger districts, it appears likely that at least 90% of the direct certification systems were State operated.

Table VII-10: Share of Public NSLP School Districts by Participation in Direct Certification, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	District uses direct certification		State operates direct certification system:		
			Yes	No	Don't know
	(number)	(percent)	------------------	(percent)	----------------
All districts	9,290	70.8	84.4	4.2	11.4
District size[1/]					
Less than 1,000	3,881	70.3	79.0	6.3	14.7
1,000 – 4,999	3,938	69.9	87.0	2.6	10.4
5,000 – 24,999	1,198	73.3	92.8	3.3	3.9
25,000 or more	207	89.2	91.3	4.8	3.9
Program participation					
NSLP and SBP	7,056	75.3	86.9	3.3	9.8
NSLP only	1,814	57.8	72.8	8.7	18.5
District poverty level[2/]					
High (>60% f&r)	1,675	74.2	83.2	9.4	7.4
Medium (31-60% f&r)	3,667	76.0	87.5	2.7	9.8
Low (≤30% f&r)	3,883	65.4	82.3	3.6	14.2

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.
[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.
Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Of those school districts in States that operate on State-wide direct certification program, 50.2% report that the State notifies qualifying households directly of their children's eligibility for free school meals. Another 23.3% didn't know whether the State directly contacted qualifying households. Larger districts experienced a somewhat smaller incidence of States directly contacting households.

Table VII-11: Share of Public NSLP School Districts Participating in Direct Certification, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	State sends letter to households			State notifies district				Percent of approved students certified directly
				District sends letter to household				
	Yes	Don't know	Total	Return letter required	Return letter not required	Total	Total	
	----(percent)----		(number)	------------(percent)-------------			(number)	(percent)
All districts	50.2	23.3	8,897	15.2	73.0	88.2	5,248	34.5
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	50.8	30.1	3,638	17.7	66.9	84.6	1,881	29.3
1,000 – 4,999	51.9	21.7	3,837	16.6	72.9	89.5	2,397	34.9
5,000 – 24,999	43.3	10.5	1,160	7.4	83.9	91.4	781	35.1
25,000 or more	37.6	12.7	197	3.6	88.6	92.2	167	34.2
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	49.9	21.3	6,825	13.3	75.7	89.0	4,268	34.9
NSLP only	48.4	34.1	1,656	28.6	53.3	82.0	748	28.9
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	52.7	22.7	1,518	10.1	77.8	87.9	1,008	39.3
Medium (31-60% f&r)	46.3	22.2	3,569	12.2	75.0	87.3	2,387	34.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	52.5	25.0	3,745	21.9	67.4	89.3	1,831	23.7

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Survey results indicate that 59.0% of all districts operating in States with direct certification programs received a list of qualifying students from the State to use in directly certifying students. Of those districts that receive this list, 88.2% sent letters to the qualifying households notifying them of the eligibility of their children. Of those districts that sent letters to households on the basis of the State-supplied lists, 82.8% did not require that the letters be returned for the children to become certified to receive free meals.

Across all districts with access to State-wide certification programs, direct certification was responsible for approximately one-third (34.5%) of all students approved to receive free meals in SY 1998/99. The share was highest in the high poverty districts where 39.3% of all free eligibles were direct certified.

Afterschool Care Programs

With the increased number of families in which both parents work and the large number of single-parent families, the need for afterschool care has risen sharply in recent years. Data collected by the US Department of Education in 1999 through its National Household Education Survey reveals that nearly half (48.1%) of all children in Grades K-8 received care before or after school from someone other than their parents.[1] Over one-quarter (25.9%) of all children in Grades 6-8 were found to be without any supervision before or after school.

Through both its National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and its Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the USDA is authorized to provide cash reimbursements in support of afterschool snack programs. Any school participating in the NSLP may participate in the afterschool program. The program must be operated under authority of the school, though other organizations may be delegated authority for day-to-day operations. The afterschool activities must meet certain criteria in that they must "include education or enrichment activities in organized, structured, and supervised environments."[2] The rate of reimbursement for snacks served under the NSLP authority varies, depending on whether the school is in a high poverty area.[3]

To qualify for reimbursement under CACFP, the site must be in area served by a school in which at least 50% of the enrollment qualifies for free and reduced price meals. Also, unlike under the NSLP, all snacks served under CACFP must be provided free of charge and all reimbursements are on this basis.

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[1] US Department of Education. *The Condition of Education 2000*, Section 6, Table 58-1.

[2] USDA, FNS, Memorandum to State and Regional Directors from Stanley C. Garnett on Reimbursement for Snacks in After School Care Programs, January 14, 1999.

[3] A high poverty area is defined as an area served by a school in which at least 50% of the enrolled children are eligible for free or reduced price meals.

Nearly one-third (31.8%) of all public NSLP school districts report that afterschool care programs are held in their schools. The frequency with which these programs are held is closely associated with district size, increasing as district size increases. While only 15.2% of districts of less than 1,000 enrollment held afterschool programs in SY 1998/99, 84.9% of the largest districts held them.

Interestingly, there appears to be little association between district poverty level and the presence of afterschool care programs. If anything, it would appear that they are found with slightly higher frequency among low poverty districts, particularly at the elementary level.

As expected, the majority of all afterschool care programs (92%) are held in elementary schools. In fact, just over one-quarter (25.5%) of all elementary schools nationwide provide afterschool care. Again, the frequency of these programs is highest in the largest districts and lowest in the smallest districts, both in elementary and middle/secondary schools.

Table VII-12: Share of Public NSLP Schools in Which Afterschool Care Programs are Held, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District Characteristics	Districts		Elementary		Middle/Secondary		Other	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
All	4,167	31.8	12,420	25.5	1,078	4.1	301	4.9
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	839	15.2	649	13.9	38	1.2	102	5.7
1,000 – 4,999	2,060	36.6	3,110	20.6	387	4.0	63	3.3
5,000 – 24,999	1,039	63.5	4,893	29.6	425	5.6	92	7.7
25,000 or more	197	84.9	3,757	30.3	228	4.2	43	3.7
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	3,137	33.5	11,023	29.4	986	5.4	260	7.5
NSLP only	830	26.4	1,313	20.2	90	2.4	41	3.4
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	660	29.2	2,567	24.3	274	5.8	68	4.3
Medium (31-60% f&r)	1,433	29.7	4,714	25.1	473	4.5	135	5.2
Low (≤30% f&r)	2,043	34.4	5,127	26.5	331	3.1	97	5.1

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Note: Of the SFAs that reported afterschool care programs, 28.7% provided no information on the number of schools

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Of those districts hosting afterschool care programs in their schools, slightly more than half (56.4%) were sponsored by the districts themselves. Another 4.8% of the programs were sponsored by individual schools. Thus, public school systems, in whole or in part, were responsible for 61.2% of all programs. The next most frequently mentioned sponsor, the YMCA/YWCA, was a distant second accounting for 12.4% of the total.

Table VII-13: Number of Public NSLP School Districts by Sponsorship of Afterschool Care Programs, SY 1998/99

Sponsor	Number of districts	Percent of districts with afterschool care programs
School district	2351	56.4
YMCA/YWCA	517	12.4
Child Care Agency	259	6.2
Individual Schools	199	4.8
Community Action Agency	107	2.6
Community Park/Recreation Depart.	113	2.7
Church affiliate Organizations	19	0.5
Parent/Teacher Organizations	19	0.5
Don't know	307	7.4
Other	277	6.6

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001

A very small share of the children in public NSLP school districts participated in these afterschool care programs. It is estimated that only about 1.2% of total national enrollment took part in them in SY 1998/99. As a percent of enrollment within the districts that host afterschool programs, participants represented only 1.8%. Children from larger districts and from high poverty districts are represented proportionately more than those from smaller districts and from low poverty levels.

Table VII-14: Number of Children Participating in Afterschool Care Programs Held in Public NSLP School Districts, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District Characteristics	Number of participants	Share of enrollment in program districts	Share of total national enrollment
	(number)	(percent)	(percent)
All districts	537,365	1.8	1.2
District size[1/]			
Less than 1,000	14,747	3.1	0.6
1,000 – 4,999	91,083	1.7	0.7
5,000 – 24,999	167,780	1.6	1.0
25,000 or more	263,685	2.0	1.8
Program participation			
NSLP and SBP	499,224	1.9	1.3
NSLP only	29,817	1.2	0.5
District poverty level[2/]			
High (>60% f&r)	205,255	2.9	2.1
Medium (31-60% f&r)	206,828	1.7	1.2
Low (≤30% f&r)	125,211	1.2	0.7

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

School food directors were asked to estimate the share of afterschool care programs taking place in their schools in which food was served to the participating children. Nearly half (48.9%) indicated that "all" programs in their districts served food while only 14.9% reported that "none" served food. Fully 60.4% responded that at least some of the programs served food. A sizable share (24.6%) of the responding school food directors indicated that they didn't know whether food was being served. While this is not surprising given that numerous other sponsors take part in the programs, to the extent reimbursements are being collected under the NSLP, school food directors would be expected to be knowledgeable of the program.

The most notable difference is found among districts of different size. A substantially larger share of districts of 25,000 or more enrollment indicate that at least some food is served compared to districts of less than 1,000 (75.7% versus 51.7%). No other significant differences are observed.

Table VII-15: Proportion of Afterschool Care Programs Held in Public NSLP School Districts in Which Food is Served as Percent of All Districts With Afterschool Care Programs, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District Characteristics	Proportion of afterschool care programs: All	Most	Some	None	Don't know	Total number of districts
	---------------------	-----	(percent)	-----	---------------------	(number)
All districts	48.9	6.7	4.8	14.9	24.6	4,167
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	45.9	1.7	4.1	24.8	23.6	839
1,000 – 4,999	50.3	5.4	4.7	13.1	26.5	2,060
5,000 – 24,999	48.6	11.5	4.5	11.7	23.6	1,039
25,000 or more	47.2	17.3	11.2	5.1	19.3	197
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	51.8	7.8	5.3	12.9	22.2	3,137
NSLP only	40.6	3.4	1.8	21.2	33.1	831
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	53.3	6.4	8.3	18.8	13.2	659
Medium (31-60% f&r)	46.9	9.3	6.1	12.5	25.2	1,434
Low (≤30% f&r)	48.8	5.1	2.8	15.0	28.2	2,043

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

To qualify for reimbursement under the NSLP, the snack that is served to participants must meet the USDA meal pattern requirement for snacks. That is, it must contain at least two different components from the following:

- a serving of milk
- a serving of meat or meat alternative
- a serving of vegetable or fruit or full strength vegetable or fruit juice (juice and milk cannot be served in the same snack)
- a serving of whole grain or enriched bread or cereal.

Survey respondents from those districts where food was served in their afterschool programs were asked whether snacks, meals, or a combination of the two were served. A large majority (92%) of those who knew what was served indicated that only snacks were provided. A combination of snacks and meals were reported by 5% to 6% of those districts that provide food while fewer than 2% reported serving only meals. No major departures from this general pattern were evident among districts of different size, program participation, or poverty level.

Table VII-16: *Share of Public NSLP School Districts Providing Food to Afterschool Care Program Participants, by Type of Food Most Commonly Offered and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99*

District Characteristics	Type of food offered:					Total number of districts
	Snacks only	Meal only	Snacks and meal	Other	Don't know	
	----------------	----------------	(percent)	----------------	----------------	(number)
All districts	85.2	1.4	5.2	0.8	7.4	2,809
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	87.0	1.4	5.3	0.0	6.3	492
1,000 – 4,999	81.6	2.2	6.0	1.1	9.1	1,379
5,000 – 24,999	89.6	0.0	3.7	0.7	6.1	758
25,000 or more	89.4	1.2	5.0	0.6	3.7	161
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	86.0	1.2	5.3	0.5	7.0	2,256
NSLP only	80.8	1.8	4.3	2.2	11.0	447
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	90.0	3.8	0.8	0.2	5.2	480
Medium (31-60% f&r)	86.9	1.3	5.1	0.0	6.7	1,013
Low (≤30% f&r)	82.0	0.6	6.9	1.5	8.9	1,297

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

To the extent food served in these programs required preparation and the respondent was familiar with who prepared it, this responsibility fell almost exclusively and about equally on program sponsors (50.4%) and school food service employees (44.7%). For 19.2% of the districts, excluding those respondents who didn't know who prepared the food, no preparation was required.

Table VII-17: Number of Public NSLP School Districts Providing Food in Afterschool Care Program, by Party Responsible for Food Preparation, SY 1998/99

Party responsible	Number	Percent of all districts providing afterschool food care
School food service employees	1032	36.8
Outside vendors	44	1.6
Program sponsors	1166	41.5
No preparation required	468	16.7
Other	71	2.5
Don't know	362	12.9

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Federal reimbursements for food served to participants in qualifying afterschool care programs are available through two USDA programs, NSLP and CACFP, as noted above. The two programs have somewhat different requirements and bases for claiming reimbursement.

Survey findings indicate that of all districts that provided food in their afterschool programs, only 24.1% received Federal reimbursements. Since only about 31.8% of all public school districts host afterschool care programs and of these, 60.4% knew that food was provided, the share of all districts that receive Federal reimbursement is only about 4.6%. A somewhat greater share of the largest districts (44.1%) and the high poverty districts (45.2%) reported receiving Federal reimbursement.

Of those districts that know the program source of their Federal reimbursements, nearly three-quarters (73.9%) report that it is through the NSLP while the remaining one-quarter indicates that CACFP is the source.

Table VII-18: Share of Public NSLP School Districts that Receive Federal Reimbursements for the Food Provided in Afterschool Care Programs, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District Characteristics	Districts receiving Federal reimbursements		Federal reimbursements claimed under:		
	Number	Percent of total with afterschool programs	CACFP	NSLP	Don't know
			-------(percent of total claiming reimbursements)-------		
All districts	677	24.1	23.6	66.8	9.6
District size[1/]					
Less than 1,000	113	23.0	9.6	76.9	13.5
1,000 – 4,999	338	24.5	27.4	66.1	6.5
5,000 – 24,999	137	18.1	24.8	61.3	13.9
25,000 or more	71	44.1	30.0	68.6	1.4
Program participation					
NSLP and SBP	544	4.1	24.9	66.2	9.0
NSLP only	92	20.6	16.9	74.2	9.0
District poverty level[2/]					
High (>60% f&r)	217	45.2	20.3	75.4	4.3
Medium (31-60% f&r)	254	25.1	30.7	62.2	7.1
Low (≤30% f&r)	187	14.4	20.4	64.5	15.1

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

When asked if they maintain enrollment and/or participation records for their afterschool programs, a majority (79.1%) of those districts providing food responded that they maintain both. Less than 2% said that they maintained neither type of record.

Table VII-19: Number of Public NSLP School Districts Maintaining Enrollment and/or Participation Records of Afterschool Care Programs in which Food is Provided, SY 1998/99

Records:	Number of districts	Percent of districts with afterschool programs
Enrollment and Participation	2,220	79.1
Enrollment records only	339	12.1
Participation records only	196	7.0
Neither	53	1.9

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Charter Schools

Beginning with Minnesota in 1991, individual States have adopted legislation authorizing the formation of "charter schools" within their States. Charter schools are public schools that are created through formal agreement with the State or with a local school board. Under their charters, these schools are granted a high degree of operational control and are freed from many of the requirements that other schools must meet. In return, charter schools are held accountable for achieving certain educational objectives specified in the charter.

The establishment and operation of charter schools is presently authorized in 31 States. According to the Center for Educational Reform, a nonprofit advocacy organization, at the beginning of SY 2000/01, there were over 2,000 charter schools operating in 35 States and the District of Columbia. The number has risen from only two in 1992/93 to 254 in 1995/96 to the present level. Over half (57%) of all charter schools are located in Arizona, California, Texas, Michigan, and Florida. A survey conducted for the US Department of Education in SY 1998/99 estimated that there were 1,484 charter schools operating at 1,605 school sites.[1] Collectively, these schools had an enrollment of more than 250,000 students, equivalent to 0.8 percent of all public school students in the 27 states that reported running charter schools that year.

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[1] Office of Education Research and Improvement, US Department of Education, The State of Charter Schools, 2000, 4th Year Report, January 2000.

Among their other findings, the DOE study found that:

- On average, charter schools have substantially smaller enrollments than other public schools – a median of 137 students versus a median of 475 students in all public schools in the 27 States.
- Seven of 10 charter schools are newly created schools as opposed to conversions of previously existing schools.
- A slightly larger share of students enrolled in charter schools are eligible for free or reduced price NSLP lunches than those enrolled in all public schools in the 27 States – 39% versus 37%.

Respondents to the SMI survey were asked if there were any charter schools operating in their districts and, if so, who provided the schools' food service, if it was provided. The results, as shown in Table VII-20, indicate that the presence of charter schools is highly dependent on district size. Across all public NSLP school districts, only 6.3% reported charter schools within their districts. However, when compared by size of district, the incidence of charter schools varies from 2.5% among districts of less than 1,000 students to 42.2% among districts of 25,000 students or more.

The total number of public NSLP schools districts with charter schools is estimated at slightly more than 800 in SY 1998/99. Comparing this to the Department of Education's estimate of 1,484 public charter schools the same year implies an average of about 1.8 charter schools for every district that has charter schools. Though we have no information that relates charter schools to their host districts, it is known that some districts have multiple charter schools. For example, it is reported that the Mesa School District in Arizona has 20 charter schools within its boundaries.[1] Since their frequency of occurrence is relatively high in large districts, it would not be surprising to find more than one charter school operating in many of these districts.

About half (46.8%) of all school districts with charter schools are responsible for food service to these schools while slightly more than one-quarter (26.5%) report that no food service is provided in their charter schools. Whether food service is provided to charter schools is closely associated with district size. As indicated in Table VII-20, over half (53.9%) of those districts with an enrollment of less than 1,000 offer no food service to the students in their charter schools. This compares to only 11.2% of those districts at the other end of the size scale.

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[1] The Center for Education Reform website.

Table VII-20: Share of Public NSLP School Districts with Charter Schools, by Food Service Provider and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District Characteristics	Districts with charter schools		Food service provider:				
	Number	Percent of total	School district	Separate food service	Outside vendors	No food service provided	Other
			------------(percent of charter schools)------------				
All districts	824	6.3	46.8	9.1	5.8	26.5	11.7
District size[1/]							
Less than 1,000	137	2.5	33.3	6.9	0.0	53.9	5.9
1,000 – 4,999	349	6.2	50.7	5.4	6.6	26.6	10.6
5,000 – 24,999	213	13.0	50.5	9.5	5.2	18.1	16.7
25,000 or more	98	42.2	51.0	12.2	11.2	11.2	14.3
Program participation							
NSLP and SBP	646	6.9	44.4	8.5	4.2	30.1	12.9
NSLP only	116	3.7	60.2	0.0	18.4	9.7	11.7
District poverty level[2/]							
High (>60% f&r)	174	7.7	46.0	6.7	4.3	38.0	4.9
Medium (31-60% f&r)	317	6.6	55.8	8.9	4.8	24.3	6.2
Low (≤30% f&r)	305	5.1	42.3	7.2	7.8	20.8	21.8

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1998.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1998.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Meal Counting Systems

Since Federal reimbursements to school districts are based on the number of qualifying meals that are served to eligible students, it is necessary to have a system that accurately counts and records these meals by category (i.e. by whether they are free, reduced-price, or full price). To do this, it is necessary to ensure that the meals that are counted meet the meal requirements and that they are served to eligible students.

The USDA has identified elements of an acceptable counting and claiming system and has described alternative systems in some detail.[1] There are a number of options available ranging from those that are largely manual (e.g. cashiers list) to those that are highly automated (e.g. bar code or magnetic strip). Since it is necessary to confirm that each meal meets the requirements of a reimbursable meal, they must be counted at that point in the food service operation where this can be accurately determined. SFAs are also required to establish internal controls for monitoring and editing their meal counting system, again to help ensure its accuracy.

Some school districts use more than one meal counting system. The most widely used systems are cashier's lists (55.9%), coded tickets or tokens (47.0%), and bar codes/magnetic strips (33.5%). Though less frequently used, a significant number of districts also employ verbal identification (22.2%) and coded identification cards (19.7%). Comparatively few districts (3.0%) use automated tab tickets. Indicative of the wide variety of systems in use, one-quarter (25.7%) of all districts identified still other types of meal counting systems that are in use in their schools.

Table VII-21: Number of Public NSLP School Districts that use Meal Counting Systems to Determine the Number of Reimbursable Meals Served Each Day, SY 1998/99

Meal counting system	Number of districts	Percent of total
Cashiers lists	7337	55.9
Coded tickets or tokens	6168	47.0
Bar code/magnetic strip	4390	33.5
Verbal identifications	2908	22.2
Coded identification cards	2580	19.7
Automated tab tickets	392	3.0
Other	3372	25.7

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Nearly all districts (98.8%) report that someone at the point of service checks each meal to determine that it qualifies as a reimbursable meal. Respondents were asked what is normally done if a child comes to the point of service with food items that do not qualify as a reimbursable meal. The vast majority (88.6%) responded that the child is instructed to return and pick-up the missing item. A few respondents (8.5%) indicated that the meal is treated as an a la carte sale and the child is required to pay.

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[1] USDA, FNS, *Meal Counting and Claiming Manual*, FNS-270, April 1991.

Table VII-22: Share of Public NSLP School Districts in Which Point of Service Action is taken to Ensure Food Chosen by Children Qualifies as Reimbursable Meals, by Action Taken SY 1998/99

Action taken	Number of districts	Percent of total
Someone at point of service determines if meal qualifies	12,964	98.8
Child is instructed to return and pick up missing item	11,488	88.6
Meal is treated as an *a la carte* sale for which the child must pay	1,108	8.5
Meal is counted as a reimbursable meal anyway	37	0.3
Other	331	2.6
Total number of districts	12,964	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

The majority of all districts (93.6%) conduct periodic reviews of their meal counts to help ensure their accuracy. Most districts conduct these checks daily (49.4%) or monthly (32.3%), as shown in Table VII-23

Table VII-23: Number of Public NSLP School Districts that Check Accuracy of Meal Counts, Including Their Classification as to Free, Reduced, and Paid, by Frequency of Review, SY 1998/99

Frequency of review	Number of districts	Percent of total
Meal counts are reviewed for accuracy	12,280	93.6
Daily	6,062	49.4
Weekly	683	5.6
Monthly	3,969	32.3
Annually	1,441	11.7
Other	125	1.0
Total number of districts	12,280	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Charitable Donations

With even the best planning, school food programs inevitably confront unwanted leftovers. A possible outlet for this food is to donate it to local nonprofit charitable organizations. Less than 10% of all public NSLP districts reported making donations of their leftovers. Of those that do, 59% report making them on a monthly basis. Very few districts report making the donations as frequently as daily (3.5%) or weekly (7.6%).

Table VII-24: Share/Number of Public NSLP School Food Service Programs that Donate Leftovers to Nonprofit Charitable Organizations for Purposes of Feeding the Needy, by Frequency of Donation, SY 1998/99

Occurrence/frequency of donation	Number of Districts	Percent of Total
Donates leftovers	1,099	8.4
Daily	39	3.5
Weekly	84	7.6
Monthly	648	59.0
More than monthly	219	19.9
Unsure of frequency of donation	109	9.9
Total number of districts	1,099	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

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CHAPTER VIII:
VIEWS OF THE STATE DIRECTORS OF CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Introduction

State Child Nutrition Agencies are delegated responsibility by the US Department of Agriculture for administration of the Federal child nutrition programs within their respective States. In turn, these agencies enter into agreements with local school food authorities (SFAs), usually school districts, for the day-to-day operation of the programs in conformance with Federal regulations.

In this capacity, State agencies are responsible for a broad range of activities relating to monitoring program performance and providing necessary technical support to their SFAs. This includes reviews for compliance with administrative, financial, and nutritional requirements. State agencies also review SFA contracts with food service management companies, conduct training programs, provide on-site technical assistance, and, in some instances, develop and operate computerized nutrient standard menu planning systems for SFAs within their States that want to use such a system but do not want to operate it themselves.

With such a broad range of responsibilities, the staffs of these agencies are in close and continuous contact with SFAs. They are therefore in a key position to assess the performance of the school food programs at the local level and to identify potential problems and opportunities.

Research Questions

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the results of a survey of the directors of all 50 State child nutrition agencies conducted during the 1998/99 school year. Respondents were asked questions on a variety of topics. The principal research questions addressed are these:

- What share of the SFAs within each State is using each of the menu planning options and how has this changed over the past year?
- What roles have the State agencies played in assisting public SFAs in the selection and implementation of new menu planning systems? To what extent are State agencies instrumental in providing ANSMP?

- How active have State agencies been in monitoring SFA compliance with the School Meals Initiative? How many school sites have been reviewed? Are State agencies conducting SMI reviews and administrative reviews simultaneously?
- What is the level and nature of involvement of State child nutrition agencies in the direct certification of children in households in the Food Stamp program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations for free meals?
- What is the level of activity of food service management companies (FSMCs) within the individual States? What role do the State agencies play in monitoring compliance with FSMC-related regulations and in assisting SFAs in contracting with FSMCs?
- How many charter schools are participating in the NSLP? To what extent do these schools operate their own food service programs or are they served by existing programs? Are those charter schools that operate their own programs granted separate school food authority status?
- What assistance do State agencies provide their SFAs in the procurement of goods and services? To what extent are State agencies engaged in the promotion or implementation of cooperative purchasing on behalf of SFAs within their States?
- In what ways are State agencies providing financial management assistance to their SFAs? How many SFAs were subjected to financial audits in school year 1997/98 and in what share of these districts were problems identified during the audits?
- To what extent do State child nutrition agencies secure staffing and/or other services through use of contracts? What types of services are contracted?

SFA Use of Alternative Menu Planning Systems

Nationally, the number of SFAs using the alternative menu planning systems changed very little between SY 1997/98 and SY 1998/99 (Table VIII-1). Over 4 out of 5 SFAs continued using one of the two food-based menu planning systems with slightly more using the enhanced food-based system (44.8%) compared to the traditional system (37.8%). NSMP was used by 16.4% of all SFAs, almost exactly the same as the year before while use of ANSMP fell from 1.9% in SY 1997/98 to 1.3% in SY 1998/99.

On the basis of the numbers reported by the State agencies, it would appear that a small but increasing share of all SFAs (2.6%) are using more than one menu planning system within their districts.

Table VIII-1: Share of Public School Food Authorities Participating in the NSLP by Menu Planning System Used, SY 1997/98 and 1998/99

Menu planning system	1997/98	1998/99
	(percent)	(percent)
Nutrient Standard Menu Planning	16.2	16.4
Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning	1.9	1.3
Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning	46.5	44.8
Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning	35.3	37.8
Other	0.9	0.8
	(number)	(number)
Total number of SFAs	13,888	13,831

Note: There was one State in 1997/98 and another in 1998/99 that could not provide information on menu planning. Each State represented 1.4% of the total number of SFAs during the respective data collection periods. The number of SFAs by menu planning system exceeds 100.0% because some SFAs used more than one menu planning system.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Of the menu planning systems, ANSMP is used least. In 1998/99, it was not being used at all in 33 States, compared to 30 States the year before. A reduction in the use of ANSMP is further evidenced by a net reduction of three in the number of State agencies reporting that they provided an ANSMP system for the use of SFAs in their States. In total, five States discontinued offering ANSMP support in SY 1998/99 while two other States began offering it for the first time. Correspondingly, the number of SFAs using ANSMP fell from 127 to 93. Of the five States that discontinued ANSMP, only one had reported that any of their SFAs were using ANSMP in SY 1997/98. In SY 1998/99 the number of SFAs reported to be using ANSMP in that State had increased slightly, suggesting that either the SA had been playing a negligible role in providing ANSMP support or that it was replaced by assistance from other sources.

- In four States; a single menu planning system was in use by all public SFAs within the State in SY 1998/99, up from three States the year before. Of the four, three have only food-based systems in use; the newly added State has only NSMP systems.

While there was no dramatic shift in the distribution of SFAs by their use of menu planning systems between SY1997/98 and SY 1998/99, some movement away from the use of both ANSMP and the enhanced food-based approach in favor of the traditional food based system is evident. As noted above, there were three fewer States with districts using ANSMP in SY 1998/99. And while the enhanced food-based system accounted for 40% or more of all SFAs in 24 States in SY 1997/98, one year later there were only 19 States where this occurred. The opposite trend is in evidence for the share of SFAs using traditional food-based systems. The number of States in which these SFAs accounted for 40% or more, rose from 21 to 23.

Table VIII-2: Number of States by Share of Public School Food Authorities within State using Alternative Menu Planning Systems, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Share of State's SFAs	NSMP		ANSMP		Enhanced food-based		Traditional Food-based	
	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99	1997/98	1998/99
	(number of States)							
0%	7	7	30	33	6	7	9	7
1-19	26	24	16	16	9	9	10	10
20-39	8	10	2	0	10	14	9	9
40-59	3	3	1	0	10	6	11	9
60-79	3	3	0	0	7	6	4	7
80-99	2	1	0	0	6	6	4	5
100%	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	2

Note: There was one State in 1997/98 and another in 1998/99 that could not provide information on menu planning. Each State represented 1.4% of the total number of SFAs during the respective data collection periods.
Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Table VIII-3: State Child Nutrition Agency Participation in ANSMP, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Item	1997/98		1998/99	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
State agencies providing an ANSMP system for SFAs in State	15	30.0	12	24.0
SFAs using ANSMP provided by State Agency	127	3.2[1/]	93	2.8[1/]

[1/] Percent of all SFAs within those States offering ANSMP.
Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report, 2001.*

Training and Technical Assistance

Implementation of the SMI has created additional demands on State agencies to provide training and technical assistance to their SFAs. Since most States have been providing support on this topic since SY 1995/96 when materials describing the new procedures first became available, it would not be surprising if the level of activity has begun to diminish. Also, in the *First Year Report*, we reported on the level of training and technical assistance activity in SY 1995/96 and SY 1996/97 combined. Thus, comparisons with the level of activity reported for SY 1997/98 should be judged accordingly.

Most State agencies (SAs) (47 of 50) reported that they conducted training sessions related to the SMI and provided nutritional assistance in SY 1997/98. Slightly fewer SAs provided assistance relating to the use of computers and on-site technical assistance.

Table VIII-4: Share of State Child Nutrition Agencies that Provided Training and Technical Assistance in Support of the School Meals Initiative, School Years 1995-97 and 1997/98

Nature of support	1995-97		1997/98	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
Training sessions	50	100.0	47	94.0
Nutritional assistance	47	94.0	47	94.0
Computer assistance	45	90.0	40	80.0
On-site technical assistance	45	90.0	41	82.0
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
Total number of State agencies	50	100.0	50	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

As expected, the levels of activity in SY1997/98 were substantially below those reported for SYs 1995/96 and 1996/97 combined. For example, the median number of training sessions held per SA was 8.5 in SY 1997/98 versus 30.0 in the previous two years; the number of SFA staff attending per 1,000 NSLP participation was 0.9 versus 3.1. Beyond the fact that one year's activity levels are being compared to those for two years, it would appear that the overall pace of training and technical assistance in support of the SMI slowed in SY 1997/98.

Table VIII-5: Training Sessions Conducted by State Child Nutrition Agencies During SYs 1995-97, and 1997/98 in Support of the School Meals Initiative

Indication	1995 - 97		1997/98	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
Total number of State agencies reporting detail on training sessions	50	100.0	46	92.0
Number of training sessions held by State agency				
1-19	16	32.0	35	76.1
20-49	19	38.0	9	19.6
50-99	9	18.0	1	2.2
100 or more	6	12.0	1	2.2
(1995-97 median = 30; 1997/98 median = 8.5)				
Total	50	100.0	46	100.0
Share of State's SFAs represented in training sessions				
<1	0	0.0	1	2.2
1-19	1	2.0	7	15.2
20-49	4	8.0	6	13.0
50-79	12	24.0	11	23.9
80-99	15	30.0	9	19.6
100	18	36.0	12	26.1
(1995-97 median = 94%; 1997/98 median = 71.4%)				
Total	50	100.0	46	100.0
Number of training sessions held per 100,000 NSLP participation				
<5.0	17	34.0	31	67.4
5.0-9.9	11	22.0	5	10.9
10.0–24.9	15	30.0	9	19.6
25.0-49.9	3	6.0	1	2.2
50.0-100.0	4	8.0	0	0.0
(1995-97 median = 7.7; 1997/98 median = 2.9)				
Total	50	100.0	46	100.0
Number of SFA staff attending per 1,000 NSLP participation				
<1.0	10	20.0	24	52.2
1.0-4.9	26	52.0	19	41.3
5.0-9.9	10	20.0	2	4.3
10.0-14.9	4	8.0	1	2.2
(1995-97 median = 3.1; 1997/98 median = .9)				
Total	50	100.0	46	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, 2001.

Compliance Reviews

SAs are required to conduct periodic evaluations of SFA compliance with the nutrition requirements that became effective in SY 1996/97 under the SMI. Initially, these reviews are to be conducted on a schedule that will result in every SFA being reviewed over a 7-year period. Thereafter, the reviews are to be conducted on a 5-year schedule. Since administrative reviews (officially referred to as Coordinated Review Effort (CRE) Administrative Reviews) are conducted on a 5-year schedule too, the two reviews may be conducted concurrently, at the discretion of the SA.

The menu planning system in use dictates the procedures followed in conducting these reviews. For SFAs using NSMP or ANSMP, the SA reviews the menus and production records and assesses the district's nutrient analysis for a one-week period. It can be any week of the current school year prior to the period of review. For SFAs using food-based menu planning systems, the State agency must conduct its own nutrient analysis of the menus served during the review period to determine if the nutrition standards are being met. For SFAs using food-based systems that conduct their own nutrient analysis using USDA-approved software, the SA may review the district's analysis in lieu of conducting its own. Within each SFA, State agencies must review at least one school for each type of menu planning technique in use. Reviews are limited to lunches unless a different menu planning system is used exclusively for breakfasts.

If the SA finds that the nutritional standards are not being met, the SFA is required to develop, with the help of the SA, an improvement plan designed to remedy the deficiency. State agencies monitor the execution of these plans.

Results from the first year survey indicated that several States were slow in getting their compliance reviews underway. Of the 50 SAs, 14 reported that they had not conducted any reviews during the first 1½ years of SMI implementation, i.e. during SY 1996/97 and the first half of SY 1997/98. Responses to the second year survey indicate that 9 SAs did not conduct any SMI compliance reviews during the previous school year, SY 1997/98. Of this number, two agencies had reported not conducting any reviews in the previous school period as well.

Of the 41 SAs that conducted reviews in SY 1997/98, 17 reviewed 20% or more of all SFAs in their States. At this rate, these SAs are well ahead of the prescribed schedule. At the same time, however, 12 SAs reported conducting compliance reviews for fewer than 10% of all SFAs within their respective States. These 12 SAs plus the 9 SAs that conducted no reviews all in SY 1997/98 are now lagging substantially behind the prescribed schedule. While extending the initial cycle to 7-years has given the SAs some extra "breathing room," with only 4 years remaining those that are lagging will have to accelerate their pace if they are to remain on schedule.

Slightly fewer school sites were reviewed in SY 1997/98 than in the previous 1½ years, 2,203 versus 2,426. Of the sites reviewed in SY 1997/98, 88.1 % were using a food-based menu planning system, about 6 percentage points higher than in the earlier period. A decline in the share of ANSMP reviewed sites is explained by the overall decline in the share of districts using ANSMP. The reason for the decline in share of reviewed sites using NSMP is less evident. NSMP sites accounted for only 10% of the reviewed sites compared to 14% in the earlier period and to 16% of all SFAs reported to be using this system. It is possible that some SAs have assigned a higher priority to conducting the early reviews in districts using food-based menu planning systems, but this is not clear. There is no apparent relationship between the pace at which reviews are being conducted and high concentrations of NSMP districts.

When the compliance review discloses that an SFA has failed to meet the prescribed nutritional standards, the State agency works with the district to develop an improvement plan to correct the problem. Thereafter, the SA monitors the district's progress in implementation of the plan. State agencies report that improvement plans were required for 56% of the SFAs reviewed in SY1997/98. This compares to 68% the previous year.

The share of SFA reviews that require improvement plans varies markedly among the 40 State agencies that reported. Of the 40 SAs, 29 reported that improvement plans were required for 40% or more of all the SFAs they reviewed. (This compares to 21 out of 36 SAs in the first year survey.) At the same time, 9 of the 40 SAs indicated that none of the SFAs they reviewed required improvement plans. (In the first year, 10 of 36 responding SAs reported that none of the SFAs required improvement plans.) The median share, it will be noted, was 84% in SY 1997/98 and 71% the year before.

These results provide further evidence that SAs are probably applying different standards in determining when improvement plans are required. Whether this is due to SAs raising the standards or lowering them is not known. While an improvement plan is required for failure to meet fat, saturated fat, vitamin A, vitamin C, protein, iron, calcium, and calorie standards, it is left to the SA to determine if corrective action is required on other standards such as cholesterol, sodium, fiber, and food variety. Therefore, requirements for corrective action do not necessarily mean that an SFA has failed to meet one of the eight prescribed nutrient standards.

Table VIII-6: SMI Compliance Reviews Conducted by State Child Nutrition Agencies in SYs 1996/97 and 1997/98

	1996/97	1997/98
	Number of State agencies	
Number of State agencies reporting that they had conducted SMI compliance reviews	36	41
Total number of SFAs reviewed for SMI compliance	1,669	1,697
Share of SFAs within individual State having received an SMI compliance review:		
40% or more	8	4
30-39%	4	2
20-29%	2	11
10-19%	11	12
1-9%	11	11
< 1%	-	1
1996/97 median = 15.8% 1997/98 median = 17.6%		
Number of school sites reviewed for SMI compliance using:	Percent of school sites reviewed [1/][2/]	
Nutrient Standard Menu Planning	13.5	10.1
Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning	2.1	1.0
Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning	58.2	57.4
Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning	25.3	30.7
Other Menu Planning Systems	1.4	1.0
Total number of school sites reviewed for SMI compliance	2,356	2,203
Public SFAs requiring improvement plans:		
Total number	1,129	944
Number of SFAs requiring improvement plans as percent of total number of SFAs reviewed within the State:	Number of State agencies[3/]	
40% or more	21	29
20-39%	3	1
1-19%	2	1
0	10	9
1996/97 median = 71.0% 1997/98 median = 83.5%		

[1/] Percentages sum to more than 100% because some individual school sites use more than one menu planning option.

[2/] Two states, in combination representing 8.9% of the total number of SFAs, could not provide information on SMI compliance reviews of school sites in 1997/98, broken down by menu planning system used.

[3/] In 1997/98, one state, representing 7.5% of the total number of SFAs, could not provide information on the number of SFAs requiring corrective action plans.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report,* October 2000; *Second Year Report,* 2001.

Of the 50 State agencies, 31 (62%) reported that they would usually or always conduct these reviews in concert with the CRE administrative reviews. Only 11 SAs indicated that they would never conduct them simultaneously.

Of the SAs that conduct the two reviews simultaneously, at least on occasion, 82% report that coordination of the two reviews is, at most, a minor problem. Only 7 SAs (18%) regarded coordination of the reviews a major problem.

Table VIII-7: Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies that Conduct SMI Compliance Reviews and CRE Administrative Reviews Simultaneously, SY1998/99

	Number of State agencies	Percent of Total
	(number)	(percent)
Agencies conducting reviews simultaneously:		
always	16	32.0
usually	15	30.0
sometimes	8	16.0
never	11	22.0
Total Number of State Agencies:	50	100.0
Agencies reporting that coordination of simultaneous reviews is[1/]:		
Not a problem	12	30.8
Minor problem	20	51.3
Major problem	7	17.9
Total Number of State Agencies:	39	100.0

[1/] Limited to those State Agencies that simultaneously conduct CRE and SMI reviews, at least "sometimes."
Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Direct Certification

The procedures required to establish student eligibility for free and reduced price meals can be administratively demanding. Most of the burden falls on the school food authorities, though the State agencies play an important oversight role as well.

To ease the administrative burden of the process, FNS established an alternative method of establishing a child's eligibility for free (but not reduced-price) meals called "direct certification." The procedural options for carrying-out direct certification are described in Chapter VII.

Survey results indicate that most State agencies are using direct certification to identify and qualify eligible students. Of the 50 SAs, 45 were already using it and one other SA was either developing or planning to develop a system for its use in SY 1998/99. All 5 SAs that were not operating a direct certification program indicated that they had provided guidance to the SFAs in their States on how to conduct direct certification locally.

In 40 of the 45 State-wide programs, an agency other than the Child Nutrition Agency (presumably the Welfare Agency in most instances) participates in developing and forwarding information to the SFAs. In 17 States, this other agency assumes total responsibility while in the other 23 States responsibility is shared between it and the State Child Nutrition Agency.

The lists of eligible children are developed annually in most States (38 out of 45), though three States develop their lists semi-annually. Another four States reported that while they develop the principal list annually, they periodically update it throughout the year.

The States are divided in whether they notify households directly of their eligibility or, alternatively, forward the information to the SFA. Of the 45 SAs using direct certification in SY 1998/99, 26 sent the information to their SFAs while 19 contacted households directly.

TableVIII-8 : Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies Providing for Direct Certification of Children in the Food Stamp Program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, SY1998/99

	Number of State Agencies	Percent of total
State Agencies providing direct certification:	45	90.0
Information developed and forwarded by:		
State Child Nutrition Agency	4	8.9
Other State Agencies	17	37.8
Jointly by Child Nutrition and another Agency	23	51.1
Other	1	2.2
Total	45	100.0
Lists of eligible children developed:		
Annually	38	84.4
Twice each year	3	6.7
Other	4	8.9
Total	45	100.0
Information forwarded to:		
Households	19	42.2
SFAs	26	57.8
	45	100.0
State Agencies no performing direct certification:	5	10.0
Actively developing a State-level system for direct certification:	1	20.0
Providing technical assistance to SFAs on how to conduct direct certification at the school district level	5	100.0

Source: School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report, 2001.

Food Service Management Companies

As discussed earlier in the report, some school food authorities contract with commercial firms, called "food service management companies" (FSMCs), to manage their food service operations. Though two States have laws that prohibit this practice, it is permitted in the other 48 States. The number of SFAs contracting with FSMCs to manage their programs has risen over the past several years. As reported in Chapter VII, an estimated 13.8% of all public NSLP school districts were using FCMCs in SY 1998/99. This compares to 11.8% in the previous school year.

To ensure that school districts contracting with FSMCs remain in compliance with Federal child nutrition regulations, both the SFAs and their SAs must meet certain requirements under FNS regulations. For those SFAs within a State that enter into a contract with a FSMC, the State Child Nutrition Agency is required to:

- conduct an annual review of each contract for compliance with FNS regulations
- conduct an on-site review of each SFA at least every 5 years, and
- provide technical assistance, as required.

In conducting contract reviews, SAs are encouraged (but not required) to conduct these reviews prior to contract award to help avoid the need for corrective actions once the contract is in effect. Under FNS regulations, SAs are authorized to require all FSMCs that want to contract with SFAs to register with the SA. By adopting a formal registration process, it is believed that SAs are better able to monitor the performance of the FSMCs and to advise their SFAs.

Of the 48 States that permit FSMCs to manage school food programs, 41 report that management companies had contracts with school districts in their States in SY 1998/99. Nationally, State agencies report that 1,675 SFAs were contracting with FSMCs. This is the equivalent of 11.8% of all public NSLP districts, the same share estimated in SY 1997/98.

A minority of all SAs (14) required FSMCs to register in their States in SY 1998/99. And of these, only 10 States had registered firms. The median number of FSMCs registered in these States was 5.

About two-thirds of all SAs provide their SFAs with some form of technical assistance relating to FSMCs. Most frequently this assistance is in the form of prototype specifications, contract provisions, contracts, or invitations for bid. Half of all SAs also reported that they conduct training programs for their SFAs on contracting with FSMCs.

With regard to the timing of their review of FSMC contracts, nearly half of all SAs (23) indicated that they conducted (or would conduct) both pre-award and post-award reviews. Another 10 State agencies reported that they only conduct pre-award reviews. Despite the encouragement of FNS to conduct pre-award reviews, another 14 SAs indicated that they conduct only or mostly post-award reviews. Nearly all SAs try to conduct their FSMC reviews in conjunction with their Coordinated Reviews. Of the 48 SAs that permit FSMC contracting, 37 always conduct their reviews simultaneously while another 7 SAs do so at least part of the time.

Charter Schools

Charter schools and their role in public NSLP school districts were examined in Chapter VII from the perspective of the school district. The phenomenon is examined here from the perspective of the SA's charter school activities within their States.

Of the 50 State agencies, 30 responded to one or more questions regarding charter schools. Of these, 19 reported that charter schools were participating in child nutrition programs in their States. Of the 19 States with charter schools participating in the program, six reported fewer than 10 charter schools operating within their States while five reported 30 or more. In total, these 19 States reported that there were 521 charter schools participating in the NSLP in the 1998/99 school year.

Of the 30 State agencies responding, only one reported that all charter schools within the State were conducting their own food service operations. The remaining SAs indicated that food service for the charter schools within their States was operated either by the sponsoring school districts (9 SAs) or by a combination of the charter school and the sponsoring school district (30 SAs).

Table VIII-9: State Child Nutrition Agency Role in Monitoring the Relationships Between School Food Authorities and Food Service Management Companies, SY 1998/99

	Number of State agencies	Percent of Total
SFAs permitted to contract with FSMCs: Yes	48	96.0
No	2	4.0
States in which SFAs currently have contracts with FSMCs:	41	82.0
States in which FSMCs are required to register with the State Agency:	14	28.0
Number of FSMCs registered per State:		
None	4	8.0
1 to 3	4	8.0
4 to 6	3	6.0
7 or more	3	6.0
Guidance provided by the State Agencies:		
State Agencies assisting SFAs by making available:		
Prototype contracts	28	56.0
Prototype invitation for bid (IFB) or request for proposal (RFP)	27	54.0
Prototype core contract provisions	31	62.0
Prototype specifications or guidelines	33	66.0
Training for SFA and/or FSMC personnel relating to FSMC contract requirements	25	50.0
Reviews performed by State Agencies:		
State Agency review of SFA contracts done:		
Pre-award only	10	20.8
Mostly pre-award	1	2.1
Post-award only	7	14.6
Mostly post-award	7	14.6
Both at pre-award and post-award	23	47.9
	48	100.0
On-site SFA compliance reviews with FSMC-related regulations conducted in conjunction with Coordinated Reviews:		
Always	37	77.1
Sometimes	7	14.6
Never	4	8.3
	48	100.0
	(number of SFAs)	(percent of total)
Number of SFAs contracting with one or more FSMC:	1675	11.8

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

TableVIII-10: Charter School Participation in Child Nutrition Programs, SY 1998/99

	Number of State agencies	Percent of Total
State agencies identifying charter schools participating in child nutrition programs:	22	44.0
Number of charter schools participating in NSLP per State:		
1-9	6	31.6
10-19	5	26.3
20-29	3	15.8
30 or more	5	26.3
	19	100.0
Total number of charter schools participating in NSLP:	521	
Food service operation within charter schools is conducted by:		
charter school	1	3.3
sponsoring school district	9	30.0
combination	20	66.7
	30	100.0
States granting charter schools separate SFA status:		
yes	16	72.7
no	3	13.6
sometimes	3	13.6
	22	100.0
Number of charter schools granted SFA status per State:		
1-9	7	46.7
10-19	2	13.3
20-29	3	20.0
30 or more	3	20.0
	15	100.0
Total number of charter schools granted SFA status:	344	

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

A majority of the responding SAs (16 of 22) reported that it was their policy to grant charter schools within their States separate SFA status. Another three SAs responded that they "sometimes" grant separate SFA status to charter schools. At the time of the survey in school year 1998/99, 344 charter schools (66% of the total number reported) had been granted separate SFA status.

A majority of those SAs with charter schools participating in the NSLP in their States (12 of 19) report that the rapid growth in the number of charter schools in recent years has created a number of new administrative issues. In general, these issues arise out of the unfamiliarity of charter school staff with the operations and requirements of the school meals programs.

State Agency Support for SFA Procurement

The procurement of food and other goods and services is one of the major functions performed by school food authorities. Of the costs reported by SFAs participating in past studies, food and labor have each been found to account for about 45% of the total.[1] Food procurement is a particularly demanding function in that it requires continuing attention to its many dimensions. Among the tasks to be performed are: vendor selection, food selection, development of product specifications, supervision of delivery schedules, and the development of procurement and pricing methods, among others. In total, school districts are estimated to purchase over $4 billion of food from commercial sources.[2]

Very large school food programs can afford to have specialized procurement personnel on their staffs. However, many school districts are too small to support staff dedicated exclusively to procurement. For these districts, access to outside technical assistance is particularly helpful. An increasing number of school districts are participating in cooperative buying programs, either through the sponsorship of a State agency or by joining with other school districts to establish their own buying cooperative. Results of a national survey of unified public NSLP school districts revealed that 37% of all districts were participating in some type of cooperative buying program in the 1996/97 school year.[3]

The SA survey sought to determine the level of State agency involvement in providing procurement support to the SFAs within their States, either in the form of technical assistance or direct, State-operated procurement. Nearly all SAs (46 of 50) were found to be providing their SFAs with some form of procurement assistance. This included: providing technical assistance on request (82%), conducting periodic oversight of SFA procurement (78%), providing printed materials describing best procurement practices (74%), and conducting formal training programs (60%).

The topics most often treated by SAs are those relating to Federal and State regulations, labeling and product specifications, and the organization and operation of purchasing cooperatives. Two-thirds or more of all SAs report that these topics were among those that they had treated within the past two years. Topics treated by the fewest SAs were those dealing with the "nuts and bolts" of procurement, e.g., alternative pricing and procurement practices, vendor selection, and competitiveness.

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[1] FNS, USDA, *Child Nutrition Meal Cost Methodology Study: Final Report*, 1992, p. 31.

[2] In school year 1996/97, unified public school districts participating in the NSLP purchased food valued at $3.8 billion from commercial sources, FNS, USDA, *School Food Purchase Study: Final Report*, October 1998, p V-3.

[3] Ibid. p. VI-24.

Table VIII-11: Involvement by State Child Nutrition Agencies in the Procurement of Goods and Services at the State and Local Levels, SY1998/99

	Number of State agencies	Percent of Total
State agencies providing assistance to SFAs:	46	92.0
Types of assistance provided:		
technical assistance as requested	41	89.1
formal training programs	30	65.2
printed material	37	80.4
Other	6	13.0
State agencies conducting periodic oversight of local procurement activities:	39	84.8
State agencies promoting cooperative purchasing under State auspices:	23	50.0
Agencies responsible for State procurement on behalf of SFAs:		
State Child Nutrition Agency	11	47.8
State Commodity Distributing Agency	5	21.7
State Department of Administration	9	39.1
Other	5	21.7
Share of SFAs within State participating in State-managed procurement		
0.1 to 4.9 %	2	4.0
5.0 to 9.9 %	2	4.0
10.0 to 19.9 %	3	6.0
20.0 % or more	9	18.0
Number of SFAs participating in State-managed procurement:	2,254	15.8

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Nearly half of all SAs (23 of 50) reported that their States were directly involved in procurement on behalf of SFAs in their States. In about half of the States playing this role, the Child Nutrition Agency had assumed responsibility for this function while in the remaining States other agencies had taken the lead. Nationwide, 2,254 SFAs (15.8%) were reportedly participating in State-managed procurement programs. The level of SFA involvement in these programs was found to vary quite substantially, ranging from less than 5% in two States to more than 90% in five States. It is possible that some States included SFAs participating in Statewide processing of USDA-donated commodities, but that could not be determined on the basis of their responses.

Table VIII-12: Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies Providing School Food Authorities with Assistance in the Procurement of Goods and Services by Topics Treated, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Procurement Topics	Number of State agencies	Percent
Federal procurement regulations	40	80.0
CN labeling	36	72.0
Product specifications	36	72.0
Organization and operation of purchasing cooperatives	34	68.0
Product labeling	33	66.0
State procurement regulations	33	66.0
Effect of suspension and debarment on procurement	27	54.0
Product grades and standards	27	54.0
Inventory management	24	48.0
Standards of conduct	24	48.0
Bid units	22	44.0
Vendor selection	19	38.0
Competitiveness of local vendor markets	18	36.0
Sources of price information	18	36.0
Non-competitive practices among vendors	16	32.0
Alternative procurement practices	14	28.0
Role of State procurement	12	24.0
Alternative pricing practices	9	18.0
Total number of State agencies providing assistance	46	92.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

State Agency Supervision of SFA Financial Management

State agencies play a central role in monitoring and supervising SFA compliance with Federal financial management standards, as well as financial management standards set by their State. They are assigned responsibilities through FNS regulations for ensuring that the SFAs within their respective States comply with all financial accounting requirements. This includes the conduct of organization-wide financial and compliance audits to ascertain whether SFAs are meeting the prescribed Federal standards for financial management systems. As detailed in the Code of Federal Regulations, this includes standards relating to: financial reporting, accounting records, internal control, budgeting control, advance payments, allowable costs, source documentation, and audit resolution.[1] These regulations direct the SAs and SFAs to use their own procedures to arrange for and prescribe the scope of these audits, provided that they are conducted in compliance with Federal requirements.

In those instances where audits reveal shortcomings in SFA financial management, State agencies are charged with helping the SFA to correct the problem. This assistance can take a

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[1] 7 CFR part 3015.

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variety of forms including training and technical assistance tailored to the needs of the individual SFA.

Results of the survey of State agencies reveal that most (but not all) agencies report that they are providing financial management assistance in some form to their SFAs. The most frequently mentioned form of assistance (by 46 of the 50 SAs) is providing advice on how to price school meals. Meal pricing is especially important to school feeding programs. It can also be difficult. On the one hand, schools must charge enough for their full-price meals to avoid incurring unacceptable losses. On the other hand, they must avoid charging prices that discourage participation or, should sales not be discouraged, result in cash flows that jeopardize the program's nonprofit status. By regulation, an SFA's net cash resources are not to exceed 3 months average expenditures and revenues are to be used only for the operation or improvement of the program.

As indicated in Table VIII-13, several SAs are playing a limited role in assisting their SFAs with financial management. While 43 SAs provide advice to their SFAs on how to establish financial management systems, fewer SAs (39) went the next step in monitoring the performance of these systems, and still fewer (31) reported that they were actively engaged in reviewing the financial management systems of their SFAs.

Table VIII-13: Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies Providing Financial Management Assistance to School Food Authorities, SY 1998/99

Forms of assistance	Number of State Agencies	Percent
Providing guidance on how to price school meals	46	92.0
Guidance in establishing financial management systems	43	86.0
Monitoring the performance of SFA financial management systems	39	78.0
Review of SFA financial management systems	31	62.0
Other	4	8.0
Total number of State agencies	50	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

In combination, all SAs reported that they conducted organization-wide financial compliance audits of nearly 11,300 SFAs or about 80% of the total number in the 1997/98 school year. A slight majority (57%) of all responding SAs reported that they had audited all SFAs in their State that year. Most of the remaining States (13) reported that they had conducted audits for at least 60% of their SFAs in school year 1997/98.

Table VIII-14: Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies by Share of all SFAs for Which They Conducted Organization-wide Financial and Compliance Audits, SY 1997/98

Share of State's SFAs	Number of State agencies	Percent
< 20 %	5	10.2
20 – 39 %	3	6.1
40 – 59 %	0	0.0
60 – 79 %	5	10.2
80 % or more	8	16.3
100 %	28	57.1
Total number of State agencies responding	49	100.0
Number of SFAs audited	11,282	80.4

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

If these audits reveal shortcomings in an SFA's financial management system, the State agencies are responsible for working with the school district to make the necessary corrections. Of those audits conducted in school year 1997/98, a relatively small share required further attention. Of the 47 responding SAs, 13 indicated that none of their districts required follow-up attention to resolve problems identified during the audit. Another 22 SAs reported that they worked with 10% or fewer of the audited SFAs in correcting problems.

At the other extreme were three States that reported one-third or more of their SFAs required attention following these audits. Nationally, only 421 SFAs or 3.7% of all SFAs audited in school year 1997/98 required follow-up.

Table VIII-15: Number of States by Share of Public School Food Authorities Requiring Attention after Receiving Organization-wide Financial and Compliance Audits, SY 1997/98

Share of State's Audited SFAs Requiring Attention	Number of State agencies	Percent of Total
< 1%	17	36.2
1-10%	18	38.3
11-20%	6	12.8
21-30%	3	6.4
33%	1	2.1
60%	1	2.1
100%	1	2.1
Total number of State agencies responding	47	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

Most of the problems identified during the audits are reportedly corrected within 3 months. Of the 38 State agencies that estimated the average period of time required to resolve problems arising during the audits, 81.5% responded that on average, remedial actions had been taken and the problem corrected within 3 months. Only one SA estimated that the average time required to resolve problems was as long as 7 to 12 months.

Table VIII-16: Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies by Average Period of Time Required to Resolve Problems, SY 1997/98

	Number of State agencies	Percent
Average period of time to resolve problems:		
Less than 1 month	11	26.2
1 to 3 months	20	47.6
4 to 6 months	6	14.3
7 to 12 months	1	2.4
Uncertain	4	9.5
Total number of State agencies responding	42	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

If school districts are to charge indirect costs to the Federal programs in which they participate, they are required under US Department of Education regulations to have a "cost allocation plan." These plans generally describe the nature of these indirect costs and the basis on which they are allocated among major functions.

A majority of the responding State agencies (30 of 49) reported that they routinely receive copies of the local education agency cost allocation plans for the SFAs in their State. Of the remaining SAs, 12 reported that they do not receive copies of these plans and another 7 were uncertain.

Table VIII-17: Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies by Whether They Receive Local Education Agency (LEA) Cost Allocation Plans for the SFAs in Their States, SY 1998/99

Receive copies of allocation plans:	Number of State Agencies	Percent
Yes	30	61.2
No	12	24.5
Uncertain	7	4.3
Total number of State agencies	49	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

State Agency Contracting

To help provide a more complete picture of the role played by contracted workers, SAs were asked about their use of contract employment. Of the 50 State agencies, 22 reported having contracted workers on their staffs at the time of the survey. Most of these contracts are with individuals though some are arranged through employment agencies or other State agencies.

Though they do not all have contracted employees on their staff, 39 of the 50 SAs report that they contract for services. They contract for a wide variety of services, as indicated in Table VIII-18. The most frequently contracted services, by far, are computer programming (22 SAs) and nutritional analysis (17 SAs). Many of these listed under the "other" category are for training and educational services.

Table VIII-18: Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies by Use of Contracted Employees and Services, SY 1998/99

Item	Number of State Agencies	Percent[1/]
State agencies with contracted employees on staff	22	44.0
Contracted employees by type on contract:		
Individual	16	72.7
Employment agency	5	22.7
Another State agency	3	13.6
Other	5	22.7
Total number of State agencies	22	100.0
Services contracted for by State agencies:		
Accounting	2	4.0
Computer programming	22	44.0
Data entry	2	4.0
Janitorial	5	10.0
Nutritional analysis	17	34.0
Payroll	1	2.0
Mailings	3	6.0
Secretarial	2	4.0
Vehicles	1	2.0
Other	15	30.0
None	11	22.0
Total number of State agencies	50	100.0

[1/] Percentages sum to more than 100% because individual State Agencies may have multiple types of contracts and contract for multiple services.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, 2001.

APPENDIX A

School Food Authorities Survey

OMB Clearance No. 0584-0485
Expiration Date: March 31, 2002

SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY (YEAR 2)

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service

SURVEY OF SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITIES

USDA

Sponsored by:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, Virginia 22302

Contractor:
The Gallup Organization
Government & Education Division
1 Church Street, Suite 900
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Mailing Address:
The Gallup Organization
Attn: Survey Processing Center
P.O. Box 5700
Lincoln, Nebraska 68505-9926

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INSTRUCTIONS

General Information

This questionnaire is to be completed by the School Food Director.

Please answer each question directly on the questionnaire by checking the appropriate box or by writing your response in the space provided.

Some factual questions may require information that might not be readily available from office records (e.g., average daily attendance). Informed estimates are acceptable for such questions.

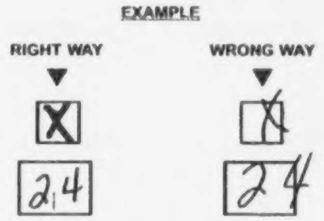
We realize that you are very busy; however, we hope that you can complete the questionnaire and return it to *The Gallup Organization* in the prepaid, self-addressed envelope provided as soon as possible. Respondents will be afforded sufficient time to complete and return the questionnaire to the extent this is required.

Your cooperation is needed to ensure that the results of this survey are nationally representative, accurate, and timely.

Survey Instructions

Please follow the steps below carefully when completing this survey.

- Use a blue or black ink pen only.
- Do not use ink that soaks through the paper.
- Make solid marks that fit in the response boxes.
- Make no stray marks on the survey.
- To answer the survey questions, please follow the specific instructions and mark the appropriate box(es).



Uses of the Data

The data from this survey will be used by federal and state policy makers to address issues regarding the implementation of the School Meals Initiative and related child nutrition programs.

Confidentiality

As a matter of policy, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, is required to protect the privacy of individuals who participate in surveys. The information provided on this form will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will be merged with those of other respondents, and the answers you give will never be identified as yours. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer; however, we hope you answer as many questions as you can.

Questions

If you have any questions, please call the Gallup Project Director, Dr. Sameer Abraham, or the Project Coordinator, Dr. Larry Mallory, toll-free at 1-800-347-1638 during business hours (8:30 a.m.– 5:00 p.m. CST). You may also contact us via e-mail at: SMI_USDA@gallup.com.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Department of Agriculture, Clearance Officer, OIRM, Room 404-W, Washington, D.C. 20250; and to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, D.C. 20503.

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SECTION 1

SCHOOL DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

1.1 How many schools are in your school district? *(Record total number of schools in your district.)*

Number of Schools

1.2 During the 1998/99 School Year, how many schools in your district are participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP)? *(If none, enter "0". Please record separately for elementary and middle/secondary schools as defined in the* Glossary *on page 19. Those schools which fall outside these definitions should be included as "Other". Briefly describe these schools in the space provided below.)*

Number of Schools	Elementary ▼	Middle/ Secondary ▼	Other ▼	Total ▼
Total Number				
Number participating in **both NSLP and SBP**				
Number participating in **NSLP only**				
Number participating in **SBP only**				
Number of **SBP severe-need** schools				
Number **NOT** participating in either **NSLP** or **SBP**				

Briefly describe any *Other* school types (e.g., K-8, K-12, etc.) here:

1.3 Indicate total student enrollment, the number of students approved to receive free and reduced price meals as of *October 31, 1998*, and the average daily attendance, either as the number of students OR as a percent of enrollment. *(Record number of students in each school category. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of Students

	Elementary ▼	Middle/ Secondary ▼	Other ▼	Total ▼
Total Student Enrollment				
Number Approved to Receive:				
Free meals				
Reduced price meals				
Average Daily Attendance–Number of Students				
OR				
Average Daily Attendance–Percent of Enrollment	. %	. %	. %	. %

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1.4 Record the number of serving days and the number of student lunches and student breakfasts served, indicating whether they were full price, reduced price, or free. If your district operates under provisions 1, 2, or 3 of the NSLP regulations (see *Glossary*, page 19), you may indicate the number of meals claimed in each category. Please provide this information for the *1997/1998 School Year* and for *October 1998.*
(If there are differences among schools within your school district for number of serving days, provide the average number of serving days for the district. Do not include serving days for summer food service or other special programs that occur when the district is not in session.)

Student Lunches	1997/1998 School Year ▼	October 1998 ▼
Number of:		
Serving days (*average across all schools*)		
Full price lunches served/claimed		
Reduced price lunches served/claimed		
Free lunches served/claimed		

Student Breakfasts	1997/1998 School Year ▼	October 1998 ▼
Number of:		
Serving days (*average across all schools*)		
Full price breakfasts served/claimed		
Reduced price breakfasts served/claimed		
Free breakfasts served/claimed (*include severe need*)		
Severe need breakfasts served/claimed		

SECTION 2

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE: STATUS OF MENU PLANNING

2.1 How many of the schools in your school district are presently using each of the following methods in planning their lunch menus? *(The first three options are from the FNS regulations issued in June 1995. The fourth option was provided by legislation approved in May 1995. NOTE: Some individual schools may be using more than one menu planning method. Include those schools in the count of each method that they are using. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of Schools

	Elementary ▼	Middle/ Secondary ▼	Other ▼	Total ▼
Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus)				
Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)				
Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning				
Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning				
Other *(Please specify below.)*				
________________				
________________				

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2.2 Do you use menu cycles in your program? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes
☐ No

2.3 For the menu planning method you have chosen, how far along would you say that you are toward full implementation of that menu planning method? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Fully implemented
☐ At least three-quarters implemented
☐ At least half implemented
☐ At least one-quarter implemented
☐ Have not started implementation

SECTION 3

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE: OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

3.1 Are any schools in your district currently using Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning, Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning, or Other Menu Planning Systems? *(Mark [x] one box)*

☐ Yes
☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.7, PAGE 4)*

PART A—FOOD BASED MENU PLANNING

3.2 Do the schools in your district publicize (e.g., through handouts or postings) the nutrient content of the meals served? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes, *all* schools disclose nutrient content
☐ Yes, *some* schools disclose nutrient content
☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.3, PAGE 4)*

3.2.a How does your district publicize the nutrient content of the meals served? *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ Informational postings
☐ Handouts
☐ Labels in cafeteria
☐ On T.V. (e.g., public access channels)
☐ On-line
☐ Verbally
☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

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3.2.b **To whom is nutrient information publicized?** *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ Parents

☐ Students

☐ Public at large

3.3 **Has your State Agency, or someone acting on their behalf (a contractor/consultant), conducted a nutrient analysis of the meals served in any of your schools?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

3.4 **Do you do nutritional analysis of your menus?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.6)*

☐ No

3.4.a **What steps are you taking to ensure that the meals served in your school district meet the *Dietary Guidelines*?** *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ Offer additional servings of more nutritious foods

☐ Substitute more nutritious ingredients and foods

☐ Use more nutritious techniques in food preparation

☐ No changes have been made

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐

☐

3.5 **In assessing the nutritional composition of foods in your menus, are food items weighted on the basis of their relative importance as determined by the number of either actual or planned servings?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

3.6 **Is your district currently working toward implementing, planning to work toward implementing, or not planning to work toward implementing the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP) in elementary or middle/secondary schools?** *(For each school type, mark [x] whether you are working toward implementing NSMP, planning to work toward implementation, or not planning to work toward implementation.)*

	Working ▼	Planning ▼	Not Planning ▼
Elementary schools	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary schools	☐	☐	☐

3.7 **Are any schools in your district using Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus) or Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO SECTION 4, PAGE 8)*

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PART B—NUMENU/ ASSISTED NUMENU

3.8 In assessing the nutritional composition of foods in your menus, are food items weighted on the basis of their relative importance as determined by the number of either actual or planned servings? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.10)*

3.9 Are *a la carte* food sales of those food items that are also reimbursable meals excluded from the number of actual or planned servings used in making this calculation? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

3.10 Has re-analysis of your menus been necessary for any of the following reasons? (*Mark [x] all that apply.*)

☐ Due to unavailability of ingredients or foods

☐ Due to changes in student preferences

☐ Due to cost of ingredients or foods

☐ To incrementally move toward nutritional targets

☐ To achieve overall nutritional targets

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐ Re-analysis of menus has NOT been necessary *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.12)*

3.11 How often have any of your menus required re-analysis of their nutritional composition? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Weekly

☐ Biweekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Quarterly

☐ Semester

☐ Semi-annually

☐ Annually

3.12 Do the schools in your district publicize (e.g., through handouts or postings) the nutrient content of the meals served? *(Mark [x] one response.)*

☐ Yes; *all* schools disclose nutrient content

☐ Yes; *some* schools disclose nutrient content

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.13 PAGE 6)*

3.12.a How does your district publicize the nutrient content of the meals served? *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ Informational postings

☐ Handouts

☐ Labels in cafeteria

☐ On T.V. (e.g., public access channels)

☐ On-line

☐ Verbally

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

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3.13 Do you have any schools that use Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.16)*

3.14 Has your district submitted menus and recipes to your State Agency for approval? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.14.b)*

3.14.a Were these menus approved either in whole or in part? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes → *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.15)*

☐ No → *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.15)*

3.14.b When do you plan to submit this information? *(Record month and year.)*

Date ☐☐ (Month) - ☐☐☐☐ (Year)

3.15 Who is (or will be) conducting nutrient analysis for your district? *(Mark [x] one category.)*

☐ State Agency

☐ Another school district

☐ Private consultant

☐ Food service management company

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

3.16 Do you offer school breakfasts? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.18)*

3.17 Are you implementing NSMP in your *breakfast* program? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

3.18 Are you implementing NSMP in your *lunch* program? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

*(**NOTE:** IF NSMP IS IMPLEMENTED IN BOTH BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS (YES TO QUESTIONS 3.17 AND 3.18), CONTINUE. OTHERWISE, SKIP TO QUESTION 3.20, PAGE 7.)*

3.19 Does the nutrient analysis conducted for schools in your school district result in a single analysis that combines breakfast and lunch menus? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

3.20 Compared to last year, are your meals this school year very different, somewhat different, or is there no difference in the meals you offer? *(Mark [x] one box for each menu and school type.)*

	Very Different ▼	Somewhat Different ▼	No Difference ▼	Not Applicable ▼
Breakfast menus				
Elementary school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary school ..	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lunch menus				
Elementary school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary school ..	☐	☐	☐	☐
Special menus (deli, salad bars, etc.)				
Elementary school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary school ..	☐	☐	☐	☐

3.21 Compared to last school year, do you and/or your staff spend more time, the same amount of time or less time planning breakfast and/or lunch menus? *(Mark [x] one box for each item.)*

	More Time ▼	Same Amount of Time ▼	Less Time ▼	Not Applicable ▼
Breakfast	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lunch	☐	☐	☐	☐

3.22 Compared to last school year, have *a la carte* sales increased, not changed, or decreased? *(For each type of school, mark [x] the degree of change this year. If* a la carte *items are not offered, mark [x]* a la carte *not offered.)*

	Increased Sales ▼	No Change ▼	Decreased Sales ▼	*A La Carte Not Offered* ▼
Elementary	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary	☐	☐	☐	☐

3.23 For each of the following tasks, has the on-going implementation of NSMP been a significant burden, a minor burden, or not a burden on you and/or your staff? *(Mark [x] one box for each task.)*

Task	Significant Burden ▼	Minor Burden ▼	Not a Burden ▼
Developing standardized recipes ..	☐	☐	☐
Entering/analyzing recipes	☐	☐	☐
Planning menus	☐	☐	☐
Obtaining food production information for weighted nutrient analysis	☐	☐	☐
Entering/analyzing menus	☐	☐	☐
Obtaining nutrient information for foods not in the database	☐	☐	☐
Providing specifications for purchased foods	☐	☐	☐
Monitoring foods received to ensure that specifications are met	☐	☐	☐
Training food service staff	☐	☐	☐
Entering product information	☐	☐	☐
Selecting appropriate items from database	☐	☐	☐
Retraining point of service staff to identify reimbursable meals	☐	☐	☐
Educating students to select reimbursable meals	☐	☐	☐
Marketing healthier food choices to students	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION 4

IMPACT OF THE CONTINUING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE (SMI)

4.1 Compared to last school year, has there been an increase, no change, a decrease or total elimination of the following *menu related* features in your program? (*Mark [x] one box for each program feature.*)

Program Feature	*Increase* ▼	*No Change* ▼	*Decrease* ▼	*Totally Eliminated* ▼	*Never Had* ▼
Use of menu cycles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of centralized menu planning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of decentralized menu planning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of self-serve foods/food bars	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of *a la carte* in elementary schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of *a la carte* in middle/secondary schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Number of menu choices for reimbursable meals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Number of new menu items	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Portion sizes by age/grade level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Opportunity for local cafeteria options	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Number of fruits and/or vegetables offered	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Variation of menu items among age/grade categories	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Marketing of menus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of offer vs. serve in elementary schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Physical layout of cafeteria	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*					
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.2 Compared to last school year, has there been an increase, no change, a decrease or total elimination of the following *recipe or food preparation* features in your program? (*Mark [x] one box for each feature.*)

Recipe or Food Preparation Feature	*Increase* ▼	*No Change* ▼	*Decrease* ▼	*Totally Eliminated* ▼	*Never Had* ▼
Use of standardized recipes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of new USDA recipes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Time devoted to recording food production information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Modification of recipes to improve nutritional content of meals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Modification of preparation methods to improve nutritional content of meals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purchase of new equipment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.3 Compared to last school year, has there been an increase, no change, a decrease or total elimination of the following *food procurement practices* in your program? (*Mark [x] one box for each practice.*)

Food Procurement Practices	*Increase* ▼	*No Change* ▼	*Decrease* ▼	*Totally Eliminated* ▼	*Never Had* ▼
Purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purchase of prepared foods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purchase of pre-plated meals from outside vendors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of USDA donated commodities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purchase of low-fat/reduced-fat foods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Requiring nutrition information from vendors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use and content of product specification	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of purchasing cooperatives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.4 **In comparison to how students ate before school lunches were required to comply with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, have you noticed any changes in the amount of food students waste (throw away or do not eat) at lunchtime?** *(Mark [x] one box for each food.)*

Food	Students Waste More ▼	Students Waste Less ▼	No Change ▼	Don't Know ▼
Milk	☐	☐	☐	☐
Main dish/entree	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bread or bread alternate	☐	☐	☐	☐
Salad/raw vegetables	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fruit	☐	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.5 **Compared to last school year, has the *number of food choices* offered in reimbursable meals increased, not changed, or decreased in the schools in your district?** *(For each of the following school types and food categories, please indicate if there has been a change in number of choices since last year. Mark [x] one box for each category.)*

Elementary Schools	Choices Increased ▼	No Change ▼	Choices Decreased ▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐
Fruit	☐	☐	☐
Vegetables	☐	☐	☐
Grain/Bread	☐	☐	☐
Milk	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐

Middle/Secondary Schools	Choices Increased ▼	No Change ▼	Choices Decreased ▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐
Fruit	☐	☐	☐
Vegetables	☐	☐	☐
Grain/Bread	☐	☐	☐
Milk	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐

4.6 **Compared to last school year, has the *portion size* offered in reimbursable meals increased, not changed, or decreased in the schools in your district?** *(For each of the following school types and food categories, please indicate if there has been a change in portion size since last year. Mark [x] one box for each category.)*

Elementary Schools	Portion Size Increased ▼	No Change ▼	Portion Size Decreased ▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐
Fruit	☐	☐	☐
Vegetables	☐	☐	☐
Grain/Bread	☐	☐	☐
Milk	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐

Middle/Secondary Schools	Portion Size Increased ▼	No Change ▼	Portion Size Decreased ▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐
Fruit	☐	☐	☐
Vegetables	☐	☐	☐
Grain/Bread	☐	☐	☐
Milk	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐

4.7 Compared to last school year, has the number of *a la carte* items offered at lunch increased, not changed, or decreased in your school district? *(Mark [x] one box for each category.)*

Elementary Schools	Items Increased ▼	No Change ▼	Items Decreased ▼	*A La Carte* Not Offered ▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beverages (including milk)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Side dishes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Snacks	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*				
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Middle/ Secondary Schools	Items Increased ▼	No Change ▼	Items Decreased ▼	*A La Carte* Not Offered ▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beverages (including milk)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Side dishes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Snacks	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*				
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.8 Since implementing SMI, have you had major difficulty, some difficulty, or no difficulty in dealing with the following operational tasks? *(Mark [x] one box for each operational task.)*

Operational Tasks	Major Difficulty ▼	Some Difficulty ▼	No Difficulty ▼
Documenting last-minute substitutions	☐	☐	☐
Substituting nutritionally-comparable foods	☐	☐	☐
Defining a reimbursable meal	☐	☐	☐
Implementing offer vs. serve	☐	☐	☐
Serving planned portions	☐	☐	☐
Moving students through the line	☐	☐	☐
Adhering to standardized recipes	☐	☐	☐
Maintaining food production records	☐	☐	☐
Separating *a la carte* and reimbursable sales	☐	☐	☐
Obtaining production information for self-serve bars	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION 5

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF SMI

5.1 In general, how do you find the attitude of the staff, students and parents toward the School Meals Initiative? Is their attitude very positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative, or very negative? *(Mark [x] one box for each category. If you do not have staff in any of the categories, mark [x] Not Applicable.)*

	Very Positive ▼	Somewhat Positive ▼	Neutral ▼	Somewhat Negative ▼	Very Negative ▼	Not Applicable ▼
Administrative Staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Financial Staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kitchen Managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cooks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cashiers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5.2 As the School Food Authority Director, what is your personal opinion of the School Meals Initiative?
(Mark [x] one box.)

Very positive .... ☐
Somewhat positive .... ☐
Neutral .... ☐
Somewhat negative .... ☐
Very negative .... ☐
Undecided .... ☐

SECTION 6
PROGRAM OPERATIONS

6.1 **Is your food service operation currently under the direction of a food service management company?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.2, PAGE 13)*

6.1.a **Are you employed by the food service management company or by the school district?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Management company employee

☐ School district employee

☐ Consultant

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐

6.1.b **For each of the food service functions listed below indicate if it is performed by the school district, the food service management company, or jointly by the school district and the food service management company.** *(Mark [x] one box for each function.)*

Food Service Function	School District ▼	Food Service Mgt. Co. ▼	Jointly Performed ▼	Not Applicable ▼
Preparing reimbursement claims	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accounting and financial recordkeeping	☐	☐	☐	☐
Planning menus	☐	☐	☐	☐
Preparing menus	☐	☐	☐	☐
Preparing reimbursable breakfasts	☐	☐	☐	☐
Serving reimbursable breakfasts	☐	☐	☐	☐
Preparing reimbursable lunches	☐	☐	☐	☐
Serving reimbursable lunches	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing *a la carte* service	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purchasing equipment for food preparation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cafeteria clean-up	☐	☐	☐	☐
Food purchases including: vendor selection	☐	☐	☐	☐
food selection	☐	☐	☐	☐
determining quantities ordered	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ordering donated commodities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Selling lunch tickets and collecting lunch money	☐	☐	☐	☐

6.1.c On what basis is the food service management company fee determined? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Flat administrative fee *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.1.f.)*

☐ Per-meal fee

☐ Combination of administrative fee and per-meal fee

☐ Percentage of total cafeteria sales *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.1.f.)*

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)* *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.1.f.)*

6.1.d In computing management fees on a per-meal basis, are *a la carte* and snack food sales converted to a meal-equivalent basis? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.1.f.)*

6.1.e On what basis are these meal equivalents calculated? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Total dollar sales of these foods divided by the average price of a paid lunch

☐ Pre-determined amount

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

6.1.f Who monitors the performance of the food service management company? *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ School district business manager

☐ Superintendent

☐ School principal

☐ School board

☐ Not monitored

☐ Someone else *(Please specify below.)*

6.1.g Does the district perform an independent meal count periodically, to check on the accuracy of the meal count calculated by the food service management company? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

6.2 Do you have direct access to use of the Internet? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.3, PAGE 14)*

6.2.a At which of the following locations do you have access to the Internet? *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ Office

☐ Home

☐ Library

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

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6.2.b On approximately how many occasions in a typical week do you personally make use of the Internet? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Once or twice weekly

☐ 3 to 5 times weekly

☐ 6 to 10 times weekly

☐ More than 10 times a week

6.2.c Have you "visited" any of the following Internet web sites maintained and/or supported by the USDA? *(Mark [x] one box for each site.)*

Internet site	Yes	No	Uncertain
Food and Nutrition Service ...	☐	☐	☐
Team Nutrition	☐	☐	☐
Food and Nutrition Information Center	☐	☐	☐
Nutrient Data Laboratory	☐	☐	☐
Food Surveys Research Group	☐	☐	☐
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion	☐	☐	☐
National Food Service Management Institute	☐	☐	☐

6.3 Does your school district currently operate any schools under the special assistance alternatives (Provisions I, II, III) to the normal requirements for annual eligibility determinations and daily meal counts? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.4)*

6.3.a During the 1998/99 School Year, how many schools in your district are participating under Provision I, II, III? *(Record number of schools by category for each provision and total.)*

Number of Schools	Elementary	Middle/ Secondary	Other	Total
Provision I				
Provision II				
Provision III				
TOTAL				

6.4 Are children in Food Stamp (FS), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) households in your school district *directly certified* by the agencies that administer these programs or by the State for eligibility to receive free school meals? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.5, PAGE 15)*

6.4.a Does your State operate a system for direct certification of free meal eligibility for children in FS, TANF, and FDPIR households? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.5, PAGE 15)*

☐ Don't Know

6.4.b Does the State send a letter directly to FS, TANF, and/or FDPIR households which your District uses as a basis for certifying children as eligible to receive free meals? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't Know

6.4.c **Does the District receive a list of students in FS, TANF, and FDPIR households from the State (or other welfare agency) to use in directly certifying students for free meal eligibility?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.5)*

6.4.d **Does the District send a letter to the FS, TANF, or FDPIR households identified on the list received from the State to notify them that their children are eligible to receive free meals?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.5)*

6.4.e **Does the District certify children in FS, TANF, or FDPIR households for free meals based on the list from the State agency, or must the qualified households return the District's notification letter to become certified to receive free meals?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Based on State list

☐ Must return notification letter to be eligible

6.4.f **What percentage of students approved for free lunches are directly certified?**

☐ Percentage

6.5 **Are afterschool care programs (see *Glossary* on page 19) held in any of the schools in your district?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.6, PAGE 16)*

6.5.a **In how many schools in your district are these afterschool care programs held?** *(If you are not certain of the number, estimate and mark [X] in the appropriate box.)*

Number of Schools	Elementary ▼	Middle/ Secondary ▼	Other ▼	Total ▼
Offer after-school care	☐	☐	☐	☐
Estimate	☐	☐	☐	

6.5.b **Who sponsors the afterschool care programs that are held in your schools?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ School District

☐ YMCA/YWCA

☐ Community Action Agency

☐ Parent/Teacher Organizations

☐ Church Affiliated Organizations

☐ Child Care Agency

☐ Community Park/Recreation Department

☐ Individual Schools

☐ Don't Know

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐

6.5.c **How many children participate in these afterschool care programs?** *(If you can not estimate, mark [X] the "Don't Know" box.)*

☐ Number of Children

☐ Don't Know

6.5.d In approximately what proportion of these afterschool care programs is food served to the participating children? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ All

☐ Most

☐ Some

☐ None *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.6)*

☐ Don't Know *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.6)*

6.5.e Of those programs that provide food to the participants, which of the following is *most commonly* offered? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Snacks only

☐ Meal only

☐ Both snacks and meal

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐ Don't Know

6.5.f In those programs that provide food, who is responsible for food preparation? *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ School food service employees

☐ Outside vendors

☐ Program sponsors

☐ No preparation required

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐ Don't Know

6.5.g Do the afterschool care programs that provide food to participants receive Federal reimbursement for the food that is provided? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.5.i)*

☐ Don't Know *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.5.i)*

6.5.h Are these reimbursements claimed under CACFP or NSLP? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ CACFP

☐ NSLP

☐ Don't Know

6.5.i Do these afterschool care programs maintain enrollment and/or participation records? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Both enrollment and participation records

☐ Enrollment records only

☐ Participation records only

☐ Neither

6.6 Are there any "charter schools" in your school district? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.7, PAGE 17)*

6.6.a Who provides the food service for these charter schools? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ School district food service

☐ Separate food service for charter schools

☐ Outside vendors

☐ No food service provided

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

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6.7 **Which of the following meal counting systems are used by schools in your district to determine the number of reimbursable meals served each day?** *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ Coded tickets or tokens

☐ Cashiers lists

☐ Automated tab tickets

☐ Bar code/magnetic strip

☐ Coded identification cards

☐ Verbal identifications

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

6.7.a **Does someone at the point of service check to determine that each child has taken the required items to qualify as a reimbursable meal?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.7.c)*

6.7.b **If a child comes to the point of service with food items that do not qualify as a reimbursable meal, what is normally done?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Instruct the child to return and pick-up the missing item

☐ Treat the meal as an *a la carte* sale for which the child must pay

☐ Go ahead and count as a reimbursable meal anyway

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

6.7.c **Does anyone within the schools in your district review the meal counts (including their classification as to free, reduced, and paid) to ensure their accuracy?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.8)*

6.7.d **How often are these reviews conducted?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Annually

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

6.8 **Does your school district ever donate leftovers from the food service program to nonprofit charitable organizations for purposes of feeding the needy?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO PAGE 18)*

6.8.a **About how often are such donations made?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ More than monthly

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SECTION BELOW.

School District Name ☐

Date ☐ – ☐ – ☐

Name and address of School Food Director

Last Name ☐
First Name ☐
Title ☐
Address ☐
☐
☐
Telephone ☐ – ☐ – ☐ EXT ☐
Fax ☐ – ☐ – ☐
E-mail ☐

Name and address of person filling out this survey, if other than School Food Director

Last Name ☐
First Name ☐
Title ☐
Address ☐
☐
☐
Telephone ☐ – ☐ – ☐ EXT ☐
Fax ☐ – ☐ – ☐
E-mail ☐

6.9 How long have you been the School Food Director? *(Enter number of years you have been in the position in this school district. If you have been in your position less than one year, mark [x] "Less than one year".)*

Number of years .... ☐

OR

Less than one year ...... ☐

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GLOSSARY

After School Care Programs
Organized, supervised programs made available to school-age children on a scheduled basis following the completion of classes. Programs may be sponsored by the school district or by other organizations.

Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels using approved menu cycles based on nutrient analysis conducted outside of the SFA.

Charter Schools
Charter schools operate under a special "charter" or contract, usually with the local school board or the state. In return for a waiver from specified state and local laws and regulations, these schools agree to be held accountable for satisfying certain performance measures. The precise form of the charters varies among states and localities.

Elementary School
Schools classified as elementary by state and local practice and composed of any span of grades not above Grade 8. A preschool or kindergarten is included under this heading only if it is an integral part of an elementary school or a regularly established school system.

Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels by offering specific food items in prescribed quantities.

Meal Counting Systems
Coded tickets/tokens - System that includes any kind of tickets or tokens that are presented by students to the food service staff to obtain a meal. Tickets are usually coded to reflect eligibility categories (free, reduced, or paid) of the students.
Cashiers' lists - List of eligible students used at the point of service to record reimbursable meals served. List may be *coded* to indicate the appropriate eligibility category or *uncoded*. *Number lists* and *class lists* are other possible forms of cashier's lists.
Automated tab tickets - Tickets that are coded and sectioned so that when they are presented at point of service, tickets are inserted into a programmed register or automated terminal and a section is cut off by the machine.
Coded identification cards - Identification cards issued to students for presentation at point of service that are coded to indicate meal eligibility category.
Verbal identification - System whereby student is provided some form of identifying code that they verbally provide at the point of service.

Middle/Secondary Schools
Schools that have no grade lower than Grade 6 and continue through Grade 12.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
A Federal meal program, established under the National School Lunch Act of 1946, that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 94,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions nationwide.

Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus)
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels based on nutrient analysis of all meal items conducted by the SFA.

"Other" Schools
Schools that include grade spans other than those defined by Elementary and Middle/Secondary schools. For instance, a school with a K-12 grade span would be defined as an "other" school.

Provision I
A school with at least 80 percent of students eligible for free or reduced price meals, as determined by application once every two years instead of annually. A no-fee program is an option.

Provision 2
A school which serves meals at no charge to all children as determined by application once every three years.

Provision 3
A school that serves meals at no charge to all children regardless of eligibility status.

School Breakfast Program (SBP)
A Federal meal program that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free breakfasts to more than 6 million children each school day in more than 65,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions nationwide.

School Meals Initiative (SMI)
Launched in 1994, the first full-scale reform of the school lunch program since it was established. Its components include: updating the nutritional requirements of school meals; nutrition education training, and technical assistance; improvements in the donated commodity program; and, streamlining program administration.

Standardized Recipe
One that has been tested and adapted for use by a given food service operation and found to produce consistent results and yield every time when the exact procedures are used with the same type of equipment, and the same quantity and quality of ingredients.

Team Nutrition
The education, training, and technical assistance component of the School Meals Initiative (SMI).

Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels by offering specific minimum quantities of food items as prescribed by USDA in regulations issued prior to June 1995.

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Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Please return the completed form in the self-addressed, prepaid envelope provided. The form should be sent to:

The Gallup Organization
ATTN: Survey Processing Center
P.O. Box 5700
Lincoln, Nebraska 68505-9926

Attention: Project USDA/School Meals Initiative

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APPENDIX B

State Child Nutrition Directors Survey

OMB Clearance No. 0584-0485
Expiration date: March 31, 2002

SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY
(YEAR 2)

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service

CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS: SURVEY OF STATE DIRECTORS

USDA

Sponsored by: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, Virginia 22302

Contractor: The Gallup Organization
Government & Education Division
1 Church Street, Suite 900
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Mailing Address: The Gallup Organization
ATTN: Survey Processing Center
P.O. Box 5700
Lincoln, Nebraska 68505-9926

INSTRUCTIONS

General Information

This questionnaire is to be completed by the State Director of Child Nutrition Programs.

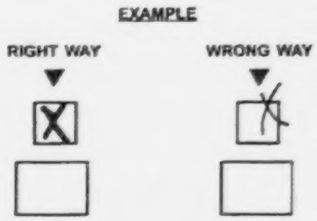
Please answer each question directly on the questionnaire by checking the appropriate box or by writing your response in the space provided. Some factual questions may require information that may not be readily available from office records (e.g., average number of hours). Informed estimates are acceptable for such questions.

We realize that you are very busy; however, we hope that you can complete the questionnaire and return it to *The Gallup Organization* in the prepaid, self-addressed envelope provided as soon as possible. Respondents will be afforded sufficient time to complete and return the questionnaire—30 days to gather the necessary information from other members of agency staff—to the extent this is required. Your cooperation is needed to ensure that the results of this survey are nationally representative, accurate, and timely.

Survey Instructions

Please follow the steps below carefully when completing this survey.

- Use a blue or black ink pen only.
- Do not use ink that soaks through the paper.
- Make solid marks that fit in the response boxes.
- Make no stray marks on the survey.
- To answer the survey questions, please mark the appropriate answer in each box.



Uses of the Data

The data from this survey will be used by federal and state policy makers to address issues regarding the implementation of the School Meals Initiative and related child nutrition programs.

Confidentiality

As a matter of policy, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, is required to protect the privacy of individuals who participate in surveys. The information provided on this form will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will be merged with those of other respondents, and the answers you give will never be identified as yours. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer; however, we hope you answer as many questions as you can.

Questions

If you have any questions, please call the Gallup Project Director, Dr. Sameer Abraham, or the Project Coordinator, Dr. Larry Mallory, toll-free at 1-800-347-1638 during business hours (8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. CST). You may also contact us via e-mail at: SMI_USDA@gallup.com.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Department of Agriculture, Clearance Officer, OIRM, Room 404-W, Washington, D.C. 20250; and to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, D.C. 20503.

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SECTION 1
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE (SMI)

1. How many *public* School Food Authorities (SFAs) within the state are currently participating in child nutrition programs? *(Record number of SFAs. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of public SFAs participating in child nutrition programs .... ☐

2. Of the total number of public SFAs within the state participating in child nutrition programs, how many are currently using each of the following menu planning options? *(Some SFAs can be using more than one menu planning system. The total number of menu planning options in use might therefore exceed the total number of SFAs in the state: see* Glossary, page 11. *If none, enter "0".)*

Number of public SFAs currently using:

Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus) .... ☐

Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus) .... ☐

Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning .... ☐

Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning .... ☐

Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

3. What role did your Agency play in assisting public SFAs in the selection and implementation of new menu planning systems during the last school year (1997-98)?

Did your Agency, or someone working on its behalf (e.g., contractors), provide public SFAs with:

3a. Assistance in training sessions? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q.3b)

→ What level of assistance was provided during the 1997-98 school year? *(Record number for each item. If none, enter "0".)*

3a.1 ☐ Number of training sessions assisted

3a.2 ☐ Number of public SFAs represented

3a.3 ☐ Number of public SFA staff attending

3b. Nutritional expertise either directly or through an outside organization? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

3c. Computer expertise either directly or through an outside organization? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

3d. On-site technical assistance? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q.4, PAGE 2)

→ What level of assistance was provided during the 1997-98 school year? *(Record number for each item. If none, enter "0".)*

3d.1 ☐ Number of on-site visits

3d.2 ☐ Number of SFAs visited

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4. Has your Agency, or someone acting on your behalf (contractors), provided an Assisted NuMenus system for SFAs in your state? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 6)

5. How many public SFAs in the state are currently using the system your agency provided? *(Record number. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of public SFAs ☐

6. How many public SFAs, received an SMI compliance review by your Agency, or someone acting on your behalf (contractors), during the 1997-98 School Year? *(Record number. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of public SFAs reviewed ☐

7. How many public school sites were reviewed when conducting these SMI reviews? *(Record number of schools. If none, enter "0".)*

Total number of schools reviewed ☐

8. In conducting these SMI reviews, what was the total number of public school sites reviewed for each of the following types of menu planning systems? *(If an individual school was using more than one menu planning system, include that school in the total count for each of the menu planning systems used.)*

Number of school sites reviewed
(Record number for each category. If none, enter "0".)

Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus)........................ ☐

Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)........ ☐

Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning .... ☐

Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning .... ☐

Other *(Please specify below.)* ☐

☐

9. How many public SFAs required corrective action plans as a result of these SMI reviews? *(Record number. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of public SFAs ☐

9a. Does your agency conduct SMI compliance reviews and Coordinated Review Effort (CRE) Administrative Reviews at the same SFA simultaneously? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Always

☐ Usually

☐ Sometimes

☐ Never (SKIP TO Q.10, PAGE 3)

9b. To what extent has the coordination of these reviews been a problem for your agency? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Not a problem

☐ Minor problem

☐ Major problem

SECTION 2
DIRECT CERTIFICATION

10. Does your State operate a State-level system for direct certification of children in households in the Food Stamp (FS) program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) for free meals? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 14)

☐ No, but we are in the process of developing one or are planning to do so (SKIP TO Q. 14)

11. Is the information on eligible children developed and forwarded by your Agency, by another State Agency, or cooperatively by your Agency and at least one other State Agency? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ By this Agency

☐ By another State Agency

☐ Cooperatively by this Agency and at least one other State Agency

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

12. How often are lists of eligible children developed and notifications of eligibility forwarded? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Annually

☐ Twice each year

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

13. Are qualifying households in your State contacted directly by a State Agency or is the information that is developed at the State level forwarded to School Food Authorities for action? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Households contacted directly by State

☐ Information is forwarded to SFAs

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*
(SKIP TO Q. 15, PAGE 4)

14. In the absence of a State-level system for direct certification, does your Agency provide technical assistance to School Food Authorities on how to conduct direct certification at the school district level? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

SECTION 3
FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT COMPANIES

15. **Are School Food Authorities (SFAs) in your State permitted to contract with Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs) to manage their food service operations?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 22, PAGE 5)

16. **Do any of the SFAs in your State currently contract with a FSMC to manage their food service operation?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q.17)

16a. **How many SFAs in your State currently have a contract with one or more FSMCs?** *(Record number of SFA's. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of SFAs ☐

17. **Does your Agency require FSMCs that want to contract with SFAs to register with the State Agency?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 19)

☐ Not Applicable *(Explain below)* (SKIP TO Q. 19)

18. **How many FSMCs are currently registered with your Agency?** *(Record number of FSMCs. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of FSMCs ☐

19. **Does your Agency review SFA contracts with FSMCs, and if you do, is it done pre-award or post-award or at both times?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Pre-award only

☐ Mostly pre-award

☐ Post-award only

☐ Mostly post-award

☐ Both at pre-award and post-award

☐ Don't review contracts

20. **Does your Agency conduct on-site reviews of SFA compliance with FSMC-related regulations in conjunction with Coordinated Reviews?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Always

☐ Sometimes

☐ Never

21. **In assisting SFAs in the State in how to deal effectively with FSMCs, has your Agency made available any of the following?** *(Mark [x] all that apply box.)*

☐ Prototype contracts

☐ Prototype invitation for bid (IFB) or request for proposal (RFP)

☐ Prototype core contract provisions

☐ Prototype specifications or guidelines

☐ Training for SFA and/or FSMC personnel relating to FSMC contract requirements

SECTION 4
CHARTER SCHOOLS

22. **Do your records identify "charter schools" that are participating in child nutrition programs, whether they are participating as independent school food authorities or as part of a school food authority that includes non-charter schools?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 24)

23. **How many charter schools are currently participating in the NSLP in the state?** *(Record number of schools. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of schools ☐

24. **Do charter schools in your state operate their own food service operations, are they served by the school district within which they are located, or some combination of the two?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Operate own food service

☐ Served by sponsoring school district (SKIP TO Q. 26)

☐ Combination of the two

25. **Are those charter schools that operate their own food service granted separate legal authority to function as a "school food authority"?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 27)

☐ Sometimes

26. **How many of the State's charter schools have been granted SFA status?** *(Record number of schools. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of Schools ☐

27. **Has the rapid growth in the number of charter schools in recent years created any new issues for the administration of CN programs in your State?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q.28, PAGE 6)

Briefly describe the nature of these issues:

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SECTION 5
STATE AGENCY SUPPORT FOR SFA PROCUREMENT

28. **Does your Agency provide assistance in some form to SFAs in your State regarding their local procurement of goods and services?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 35, PAGE 7)

29. **In what form is this assistance provided?** *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ Technical assistance as requested

☐ Formal training programs

☐ Printed material

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐

30. **Which of the following procurement topics have been treated in the assistance you have provided within the past two years?**

(Mark [x] all that apply.)

☐ Federal procurement regulations

☐ State procurement regulations

☐ Standards of conduct

☐ Role of State procurement

☐ Alternative procurement practices

☐ Alternative pricing practices

☐ Product specifications

☐ Product grades and standards

☐ Non-competitive practices among vendors

☐ Effect of suspension and debarment on procurement

☐ Product labeling

☐ CN labeling

☐ Vendor selection

☐ Competitiveness of local vendor markets

☐ Inventory management

☐ Bid units

☐ Sources of price information

☐ Organization and operation of purchasing cooperatives

31. **Does your Agency (or other entity within State Government) conduct periodic oversight of the local procurement activities of the SFAs under your jurisdiction?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

32. **Does your Agency promote the use of cooperative purchasing under State auspices?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 35)

33. **Which Agency in your State has responsibility for procurement conducted by the State on behalf of SFAs in the State?** *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ This Agency

☐ State Commodity Distributing Agency

☐ State Department of Administration

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐

34. **How many SFAs in the State are currently participating in State-managed procurement?** *(Record number of SFAs. If none enter "0".)*

Number of SFAs ☐

SECTION 6
STATE AGENCY SUPERVISION OF SFA FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

35. **As participants in the School Meals programs of the USDA, SFAs are required to meet certain Federal financial management standards, as well as standards set by their State. Which of the following forms of financial management assistance does your Agency provide to the SFAs in your State?** *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ Provide guidance in establishing financial management systems

☐ Review SFA financial management systems

☐ Monitor the performance of SFA financial management systems

☐ Provide guidance on how to price school meals

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐

☐ None of the above

36. **Federal regulations call for organization-wide financial and compliance audits of SFA financial operations. As the "recipient" organization under these regulations, your Agency is responsible for resolving any problems found through these SFA audits. In school year 1997-98, how many SFAs in your State were the subject of financial audits?** *(Record number of SFAs. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of SFAs audited ☐

37. **Of the SFAs audited in SY 1997-98, how many required the attention of your Agency to resolve problems identified during the audit?** *(Record number of SFAs. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of SFAs requiring State Agency attention

☐

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38. **For those SFA audits requiring State Agency attention, please estimate what period of time was required on average to achieve resolution?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Less than one month

☐ 1 to 3 months

☐ 4 to 6 months

☐ 7 to 12 months

☐ More than a year

☐ Uncertain

39. **Under U.S. Department of Education regulations, School Districts must have a cost allocation plan if they are to charge indirect costs to the Federal programs in which they participate. Does your Agency receive copies of the Local Education Agency (LEA) cost allocation plans for the SFAs in your State?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Uncertain

40. **Does your Agency have contracted employees on its staff?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 42)

41. **How many contracted employees are currently on your Agency's staff, classified by type of contract?** *(Record number of employees and total. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of Agency staff classified by type of contract:

☐ Contract with individual

☐ Contract with employment agency

☐ Contract with another State agency

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐

☐ TOTAL

42. **Which of the following services is your Agency currently contracting for (i.e. which of the following services are being purchased by your Agency and are being performed by someone other than a State Agency employee)?** *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

☐ Accounting

☐ Computer programing

☐ Data entry

☐ Janitorial

☐ Legal

☐ Nutritional analysis

☐ Payroll

☐ Mailings

☐ Secretarial

☐ Vehicles

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

☐

☐ None

43. Please complete the section below.

State

Name of State Agency

Name of Respondent

Last First

Title

Address

City

State Zip Code

Telephone – – ext.

Fax – –

E-mail address

COMMENTS:

GLOSSARY

Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels using approved menu cycles based on nutrient analysis conducted outside of the SFA.

Charter Schools
Charter schools operate under a special "charter" or contract, usually with the local school board or the state. In return for a waiver from specified state and local laws and regulations, these schools agree to be held accountable for satisfying certain performance measures. The precise form of the charters varies among states and localities.

Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels by offering specific food items in prescribed quantities.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
A Federal meal program, established under the National School Lunch Act of 1946, that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 94,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions nationwide.

Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus)
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels based on nutrient analysis of all meal items conducted by the SFA.

School Breakfast Program (SBP)
A Federal meal program that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free breakfasts to more than 6 million children each school day in more than 65,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions nationwide.

School Meals Initiative (SMI)
Launched in 1994, the first full-scale reform of the school lunch program since it was established. Its components include: updating the nutritional requirements of school meals; nutrition education training, and technical assistance; improvements in the donated commodity program; and, streamlining program administration.

Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels by offering specific minimum quantities of food items as prescribed by USDA in regulations issued prior to June 1995.

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Please return the completed form in the self-addressed, prepaid envelope provided. The form should be sent to:

The Gallup Organization
ATTN: Survey Processing Center
P.O. Box 5700
Lincoln, Nebraska 68505-9926

Attention: Project USDA/School Meals Initiative

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
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